KING OF BANDITS

王ドロボウJING™

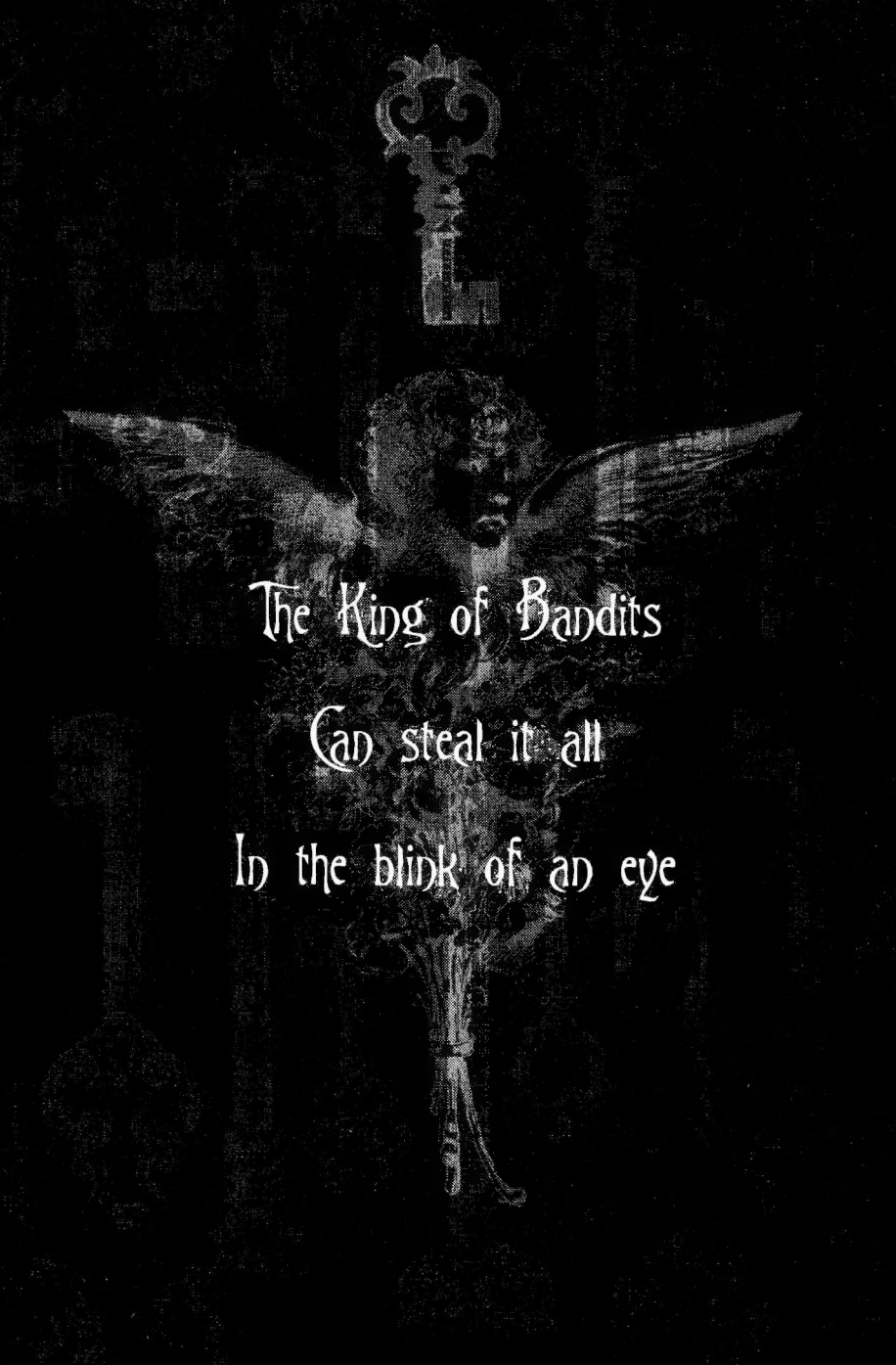
YUICHI KUMAKURA

All that glitters...

Even the stars

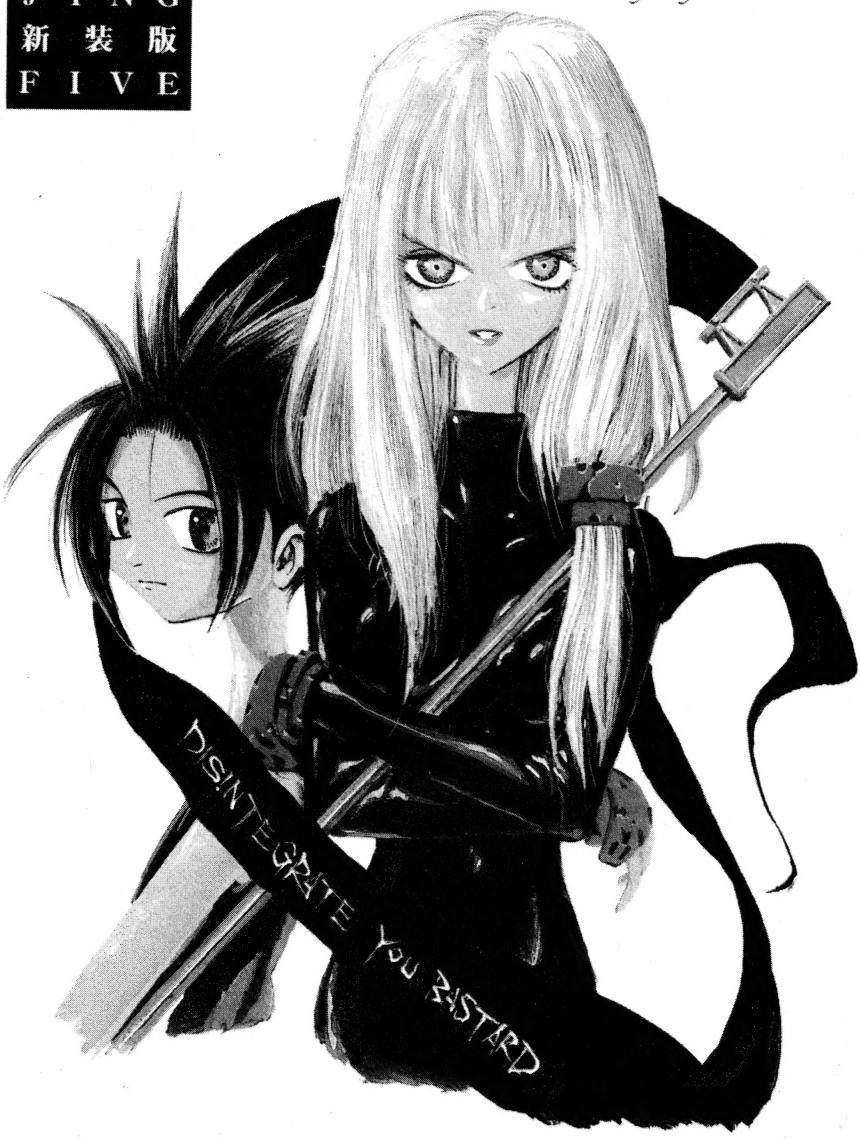
All things precious...

Even your life


The King of Bandits
Can steal it all
In the blink of an eye

王ドロボウ JING 新装版 FIVE

jing&stir



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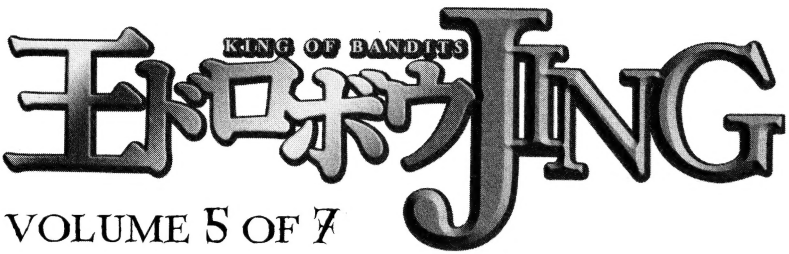

VOLUME 5 OF 7

STORY AND ART BY
YUICHI KUMAKURA

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Once upon a midnight dreary, a thief named Jing was weak and weary.
Many strange and forgotten lands he did traverse and explore.
His companion was a bird named Kir, his black wings a-flapping.
While Jing nodded, nearly napping, Kir saw booty galore.
"Wake up, Jing," Kir muttered, "all around us is loot galore."
Treasure from ceiling to floor!

Thus, this ebony bird's wiling, sent Jing's sad face into smiling,
For Jing could steal the stars from the sky, thievery he truly did adore.
The albatross sat proudly on Jing's placid bust, his beady eyes did implore,
One more thing Kir did utter, his feathers all a greedy flutter, his voice a roar,
Quoth the albatross, "Let's steal some more!"

JING: KING OF BANDITS
FIVE
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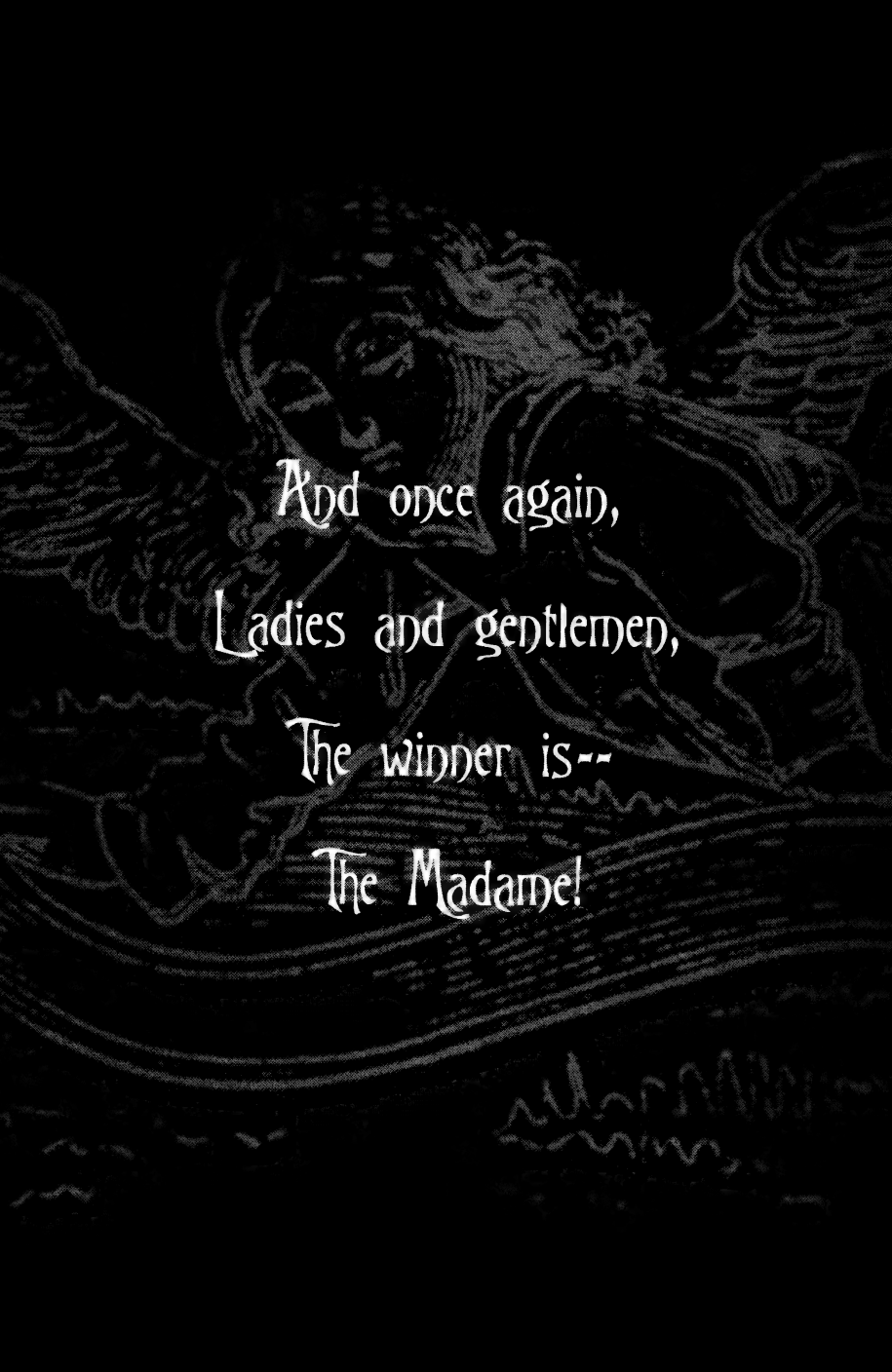
jing in a rage

juggling the dreams

In this corner...
A weak loser!
In this corner...
A strong loser!


And once again,
Ladies and gentlemen,
The winner is--
The Madame!

ＺＡＺＡの仮面舞踏会編

19th SHOT - ZAZA'S MASQUERADE

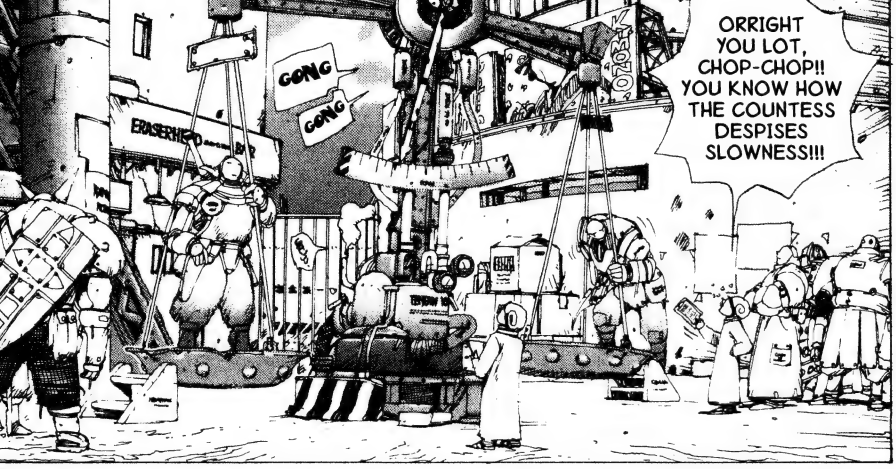
A GRAND FESTIVAL
HELD EACH AUTUMN,
WHEN THE CLOUDS TURN RED
IN THE SEASIDE CITY OF ZAZA.

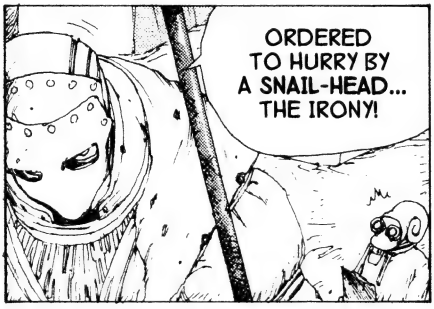
THE ZAZA MASQUERADE.

AS ITS NAME IMPLIES, THE FESTIVAL REQUIRES EACH OF ITS OVER FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND PARTICIPANTS TO WEAR SOME SORT OF MASK. IN FACT, ONE OF ZAZA'S MORE REMOTE SUBURBS MAKES ITS ENTIRE LIVING BY TRYING ON MASKS TO BE USED FOR THIS BALL. THE ORIGIN OF THE MASQUERADE, A TERM WHICH HAS COME TO BE UNDERSTOOD WORLDWIDE AS A MASKED BALL, IS NOT CERTAIN. HOWEVER, RUMOR HAS IT THAT THE PRACTICE ACTUALLY HAILS FROM THIS TOWN'S ORIGINAL PHILOSOPHY OF FELLOWSHIP: THAT WHEN MASKS ARE WORN, THE DISTINCTIONS OF RACE AND SOCIAL STANDING ARE ELIMINATED. IRONICALLY ENOUGH, THE FESTIVAL HAS TODAY BECOME SYNONYMOUS WITH SPECTACLE. THE CITY'S LABYRINTH-LIKE STREETS NOW OVERFLOW EACH YEAR WITH THE EXCHANGE OF ORNATE MASKS AND FANTASTIC JEWELS WITH WHICH FESTIVAL PARTICIPANTS MAY ADORN THEMSELVES TO VIE FOR THE DISTINCTION OF MOST SPLENDID, A COMPETITION THAT IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY COMMON...

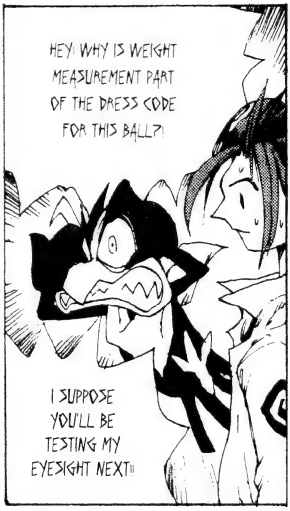
— FROM A MOVEABLE FEAST GUIDE, PARABOLA KNIGHTS EDITION

SO, EH. WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?
..AS WELL IT SHOULD BE!
MOVEABLE FEAST
YOU'D THINK A MASKED BALL WOULD HAVE A LITTLE MORE...I DUNNO...CHEER?
ON THE CONTRARY, A TYPICAL GUEST LIKE MYSELF WOULD FIND IT VERY HARD TO AVOID A SEVERE BOUT OF FEMALE DEFICIENCY SYNDROME!! OY


GONG
GONG
ERASERHEAD
ORRIGHT YOU LOT, CHOP-CHOP!! YOU KNOW HOW THE COUNTESS DESPISES SLOWNESS!!!


ORDERED TO HURRY BY A SNAIL-HEAD... THE IRONY!

WHAT HAPPENED TO ALL THAT STUFF ABOUT "FELLOWSHIP"? NO ONE HERE LOOKS PARTICULARLY FULL OF BROTHERLY LOVE.


HEY! WHY IS WEIGHT MEASUREMENT PART OF THE DRESS CODE FOR THIS BALL?!
I SUPPOSE YOU'LL BE TESTING MY EYESIGHT NEXT!!

ズイッ
BLARG... GUGU...
HUH?! WHAT THE--?

WILL YOU BE OUR FRIEND?!!
PLEASE, GIVE US LOVE.
EEEEEHHH, OKAY...ER, FIRST OF ALL, SPEAKING AS A FRIEND...
OK TO
!
GREAT! WE'LL STICK BY YOU 'TIL DEATH!

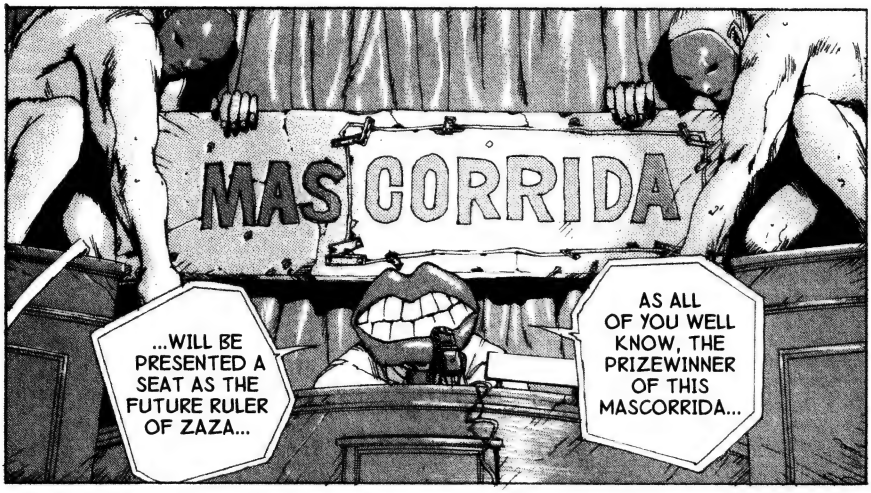
ORIENT XPRESS
CLACK
THERE! SAVED YOU SOME EFFORT, DIDN'T I?
10t
SO.
THANKS...?
WHICH WAY TO THE BALL-ROOM?

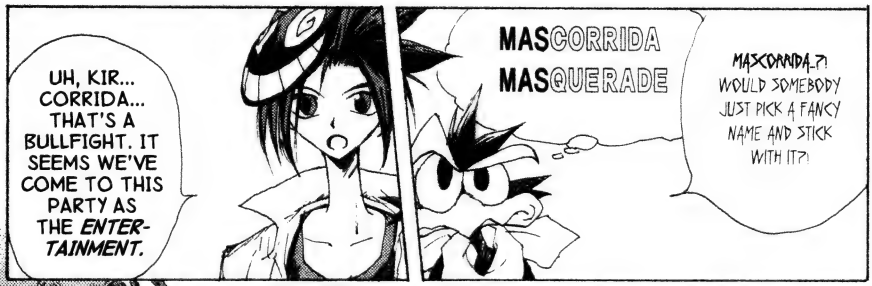
GENTLEMEN... LADIES. FOR THE PAST YEAR, ALL THOSE WITHIN OUR CITY...NAY, AROUND THE *WORLD*...HAVE EAGERLY AWAITED THIS DAY--THE DAY THE MASKED ARENA WOULD BE HELD ONCE MORE!!

SO WHERE IS THIS MASQUERADE THINGY EVERYONE'S BEEN TALKING ABOUT?

W..WAIT A MINUTE! WHERE'S MY SPLENDID ORNAMENTS, JING?! WHERE'S **MY** JEWELS?!

WE DID COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE.. THIS IS A MASQUERADE, ISN'T IT..? ISN'T IT?!
HEY!! YOU'LL TELL ME, WON'TCHA?!
DOES ANYONE HERE ACTUALLY PLAN ON DANCING?
NO, THIS IS DEFINITELY A MASKED ARENA.
DO YOU REALLY THINK YOU'LL BE ABLE TO CUT A RUG IN THAT GET-UP?
LOOK UP THERE-- ABOVE MR. LIPS!!
KIR--I THINK I'VE GOT YOUR ANSWER.
WHAT?
OH, MAN.


MAS CORRIDA
AS ALL OF YOU WELL KNOW, THE PRIZEWINNER OF THIS MASCORRIDA...
...WILL BE PRESENTED A SEAT AS THE FUTURE RULER OF ZAZA...


UH, KIR... CORRIDA... THAT'S A BULLFIGHT. IT SEEMS WE'VE COME TO THIS PARTY AS THE *ENTER-TAINMENT.*
MASCORRIDA
MASQUERADE
MASCORRIDA...?! WOULD SOMEBODY JUST PICK A FANCY NAME AND STICK WITH IT?!

AH...
AT LAST! THE COUNTESS DUBONNET HAS ARRIVED!!!
THEN, THEN, THEN-- WAIT A MINUTE! ARE YOU SAYING THIS MASQUERADE IS ACTUALLY... A MASKED ARENA?

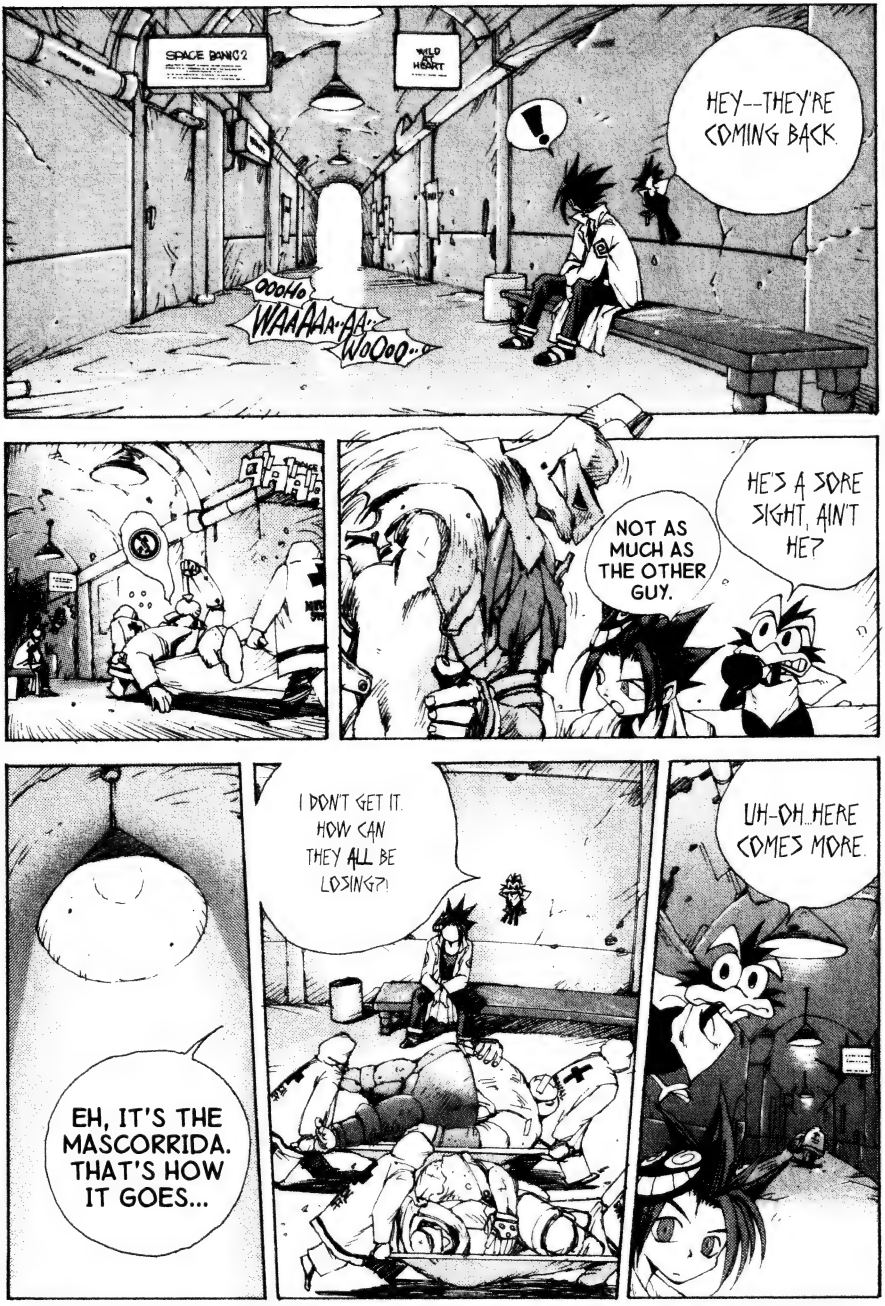
WHO THE...? WOW, THAT MASK GIVES ME THE WILLIES
!
UOOOOOOO
WAAA

UGH. MAKES ME...
WAAAAA
THAT'S WHY SHE WEARS THAT MASK. SO SHE CAN SMILE...
THEY SAY THE COUNTESS WAS BORN WITH NO REAL EMOTIONS... I HEAR EVEN WHEN SHE TRIES TO SHOW FEELINGS FOR EMPHASIS, THE MUSCLES IN HER FACE DON'T RESPOND.
HU HU HUH
...WANT TO TICKLE HER!!!
AND ACCOMPANYING THE COUNTESS IS...MADEMOISELLE STIR!!! SWEET, LOVELY YOUNG LADY, IS SHE NOT?!!!

AND NOW!! THE BLOODY BATTLE WILL AT LAST COMMENCE AS WE WELCOME THE COUNTESS!!!

HAAAAH!!
ORRIGHT, MEN! ALL THOSE AIMIN' FOR THE RANK OF ZAZA'S NEXT FEUDAL LORD--THIS MEANS YOU!!
NOW, ARE ANY OF YOU SHINY BUT ROTTEN APPLES UP TO THE TASK OF BEING THE NOBLE COUNTESS' NEW SON?!!
Train as if your life depends upon it...it does.
ZAZA MASCOPPIA
OOH.
OH.
RIGHT, THEN! YOU--AND YOU--ARE OUR FIRST CONTES-TANTS!!
DAHH... OKAY.
LET'S GO!!!
EMERGENCY SWITCH
MUTEKI-KUN
TRAIN
ACH
© MINETA

HAVE AT YOU!!!
BACK ATCHA!!
JUDGE
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFFF
UUOOOOO
GAAH!!
UUOOHH!


SPACE BANG 2
WILD AT HEART
HEY--THEY'RE COMING BACK.
!
OOOHo
WAAAAAA-AA-WOOOO..
NOT AS MUCH AS THE OTHER GUY.
HE'S A SORE SIGHT, AIN'T HE?
I DON'T GET IT. HOW CAN THEY ALL BE LOSING?!
UH-OH..HERE COMES MORE.
EH, IT'S THE MASCORRIDA. THAT'S HOW IT GOES...

ACK!
!
...EVERY TIME THEY GET IT IN THEIR HEADS TO CHOOSE AN "HEIR"!!
Y'SEE, THE MADAME, WHO'S ADORED BY ALL THE TOWNSPEOPLE, MAKES THE MASKS FOR THEM PERSONALLY.
EVER SINCE MADAME DUBONNET LOST HER PRECIOUS, ONLY SON...THIS TOURNAMENT HAS BEEN HELD TO SEARCH FOR A REPLACEMENT.
AND SINCE NONE OF THEM COULD BEAR TO REFUSE A GIFT FROM HER, EVEN THOSE WHO DON'T WANT TO WEAR THEM *HAVE* TO.
AND PRETTY SOON, THE WHOLE TOWN OF ZAZA STARTS TO LOOK LIKE ZOMBIES POSSESSED BY A GOD CALLED THE MADAME... HEH, HEH.
AFTER A WHILE, BOTH PLAYERS GET MORE AND MORE EXHAUSTED AS THEY REALIZE THERE'S NO WAY OF KNOWING WHO'LL WIN AND WHO'LL LOSE.
BUT SINCE OUR COLD-HEARTED MADAME ISN'T ONE FOR POINT SYSTEMS OR TIME LIMITS, THE FIGHTING NATURALLY GETS...A LITTLE DIFFICULT...

THERE'S A SARCASTIC EXPRESSION ABOUT THIS TOURNAMENT...
IN THIS CORNER... A STRONG LOSER!
IN THIS CORNER... A WEAK LOSER!
OI--YOU'RE UP NEXT, KIDDO.
AND ONCE AGAIN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN...
...THE WINNER IS... THE MADAME!!
WAAAAAAAA

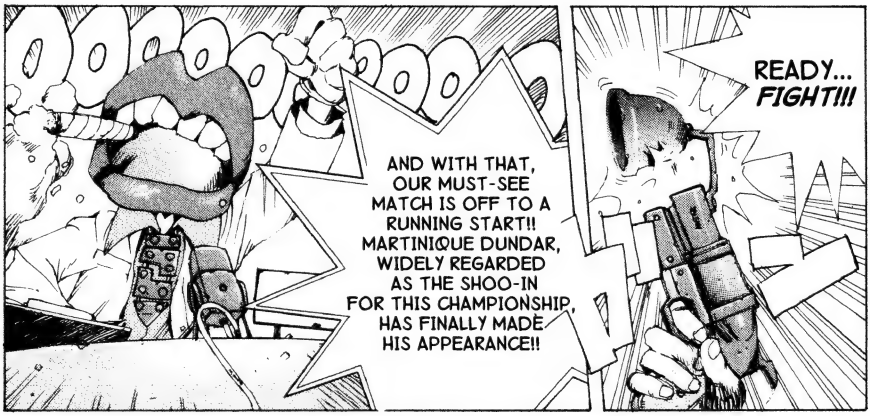
AND, NOW... AT LONG LAST... OUR MOST POWERFUL CANDIDATE YET!!!!!!!!!!!!

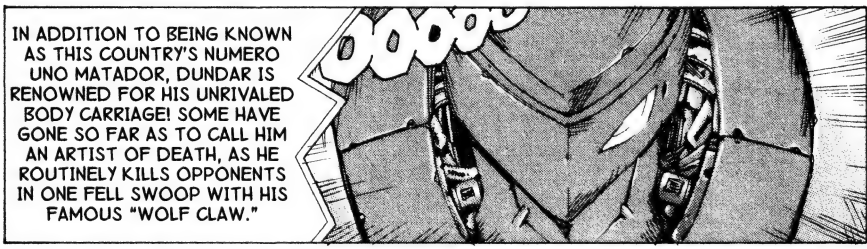
GRIGK

GRIGK

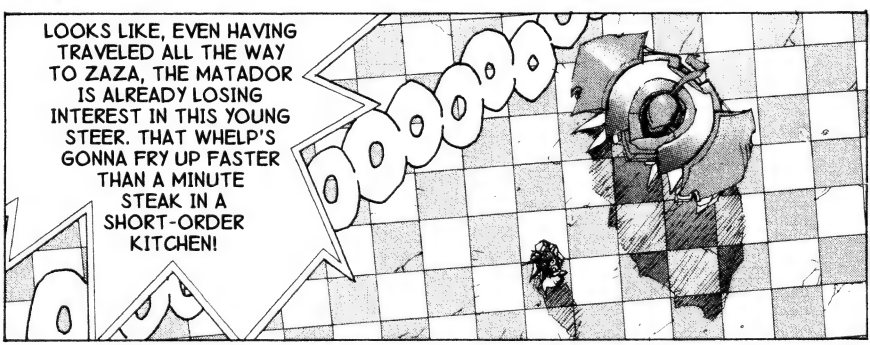
ズズズ

DUNDAR, MY LOVE!
OVER HEEEEERE !!!
DUN-DAR, MY ONLY!
CLICK
AHH, THE YOUTH OF TODAY...SMITTEN WITH A MERE HUMAN PUP THEY'VE NEVER EVEN MET! PRETTY CHILDISH... Eh, doll?
UOOOOOOOOOOOOO
WHOOSH


AND WITH THAT, OUR MUST-SEE MATCH IS OFF TO A RUNNING START!! MARTINIQUE DUNDAR, WIDELY REGARDED AS THE SHOO-IN FOR THIS CHAMPIONSHIP, HAS FINALLY MADE HIS APPEARANCE!!
READY... FIGHT!!!

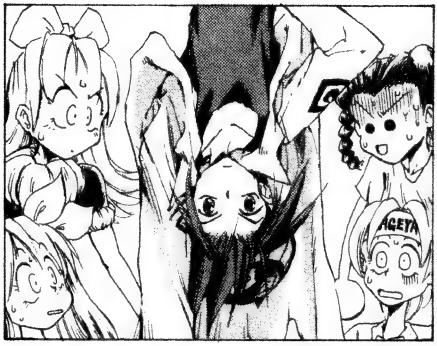

IN ADDITION TO BEING KNOWN AS THIS COUNTRY'S NUMERO UNO MATADOR, DUNDAR IS RENOWNED FOR HIS UNRIVALED BODY CARRIAGE! SOME HAVE GONE SO FAR AS TO CALL HIM AN ARTIST OF DEATH, AS HE ROUTINELY KILLS OPPONENTS IN ONE FELL SWOOP WITH HIS FAMOUS "WOLF CLAW."

?
DUNDAR'S CHALLENGER, A MYSTERIOUS LAD CLEARLY LACKING IN ANY SORT OF PHYSICAL STRENGTH, SEEMS UNIQUELY UNDERQUALIFIED FOR A PLACE IN DUNDAR'S PORTFOLIO OF PAIN... HE APPEARS NOT EVEN TO HAVE BROUGHT A WEAPON!!!

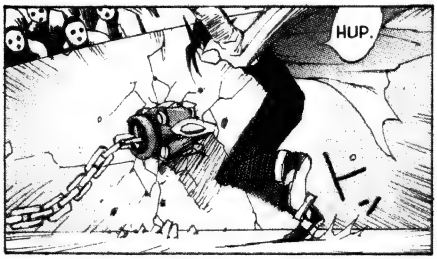

LOOKS LIKE, EVEN HAVING TRAVELED ALL THE WAY TO ZAZA, THE MATADOR IS ALREADY LOSING INTEREST IN THIS YOUNG STEER. THAT WHELP'S GONNA FRY UP FASTER THAN A MINUTE STEAK IN A SHORT-ORDER KITCHEN!

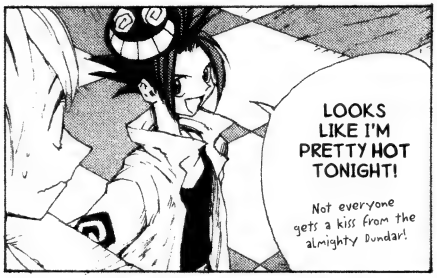
YAAAH!!
SKU
I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS! HE...THE BOY ACTUALLY DODGED DUNDAR'S INFAMOUS LEFT HAND! THE LEFT HAND OF GOD, AS IT HAS SOMETIMES BEEN CALLED!!!
DO
REALLY?
CLANK SCREEK
WHY YOU *BRAT*... MY LEFT HAND'S NEVER MISSED A MARK BEFORE!
THEN, THIS'LL BE YOUR FIRST LOSS TO A *CHILD*?

WHAAT?!
I'VE GOT YOU NOW!!

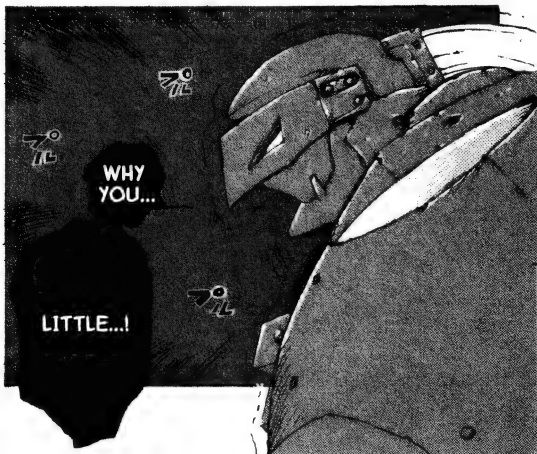

AGETA

KAGE


HUP.


LOOKS LIKE I'M PRETTY HOT TONIGHT!
Not everyone gets a kiss from the almighty Dundar!

NOWWWW THEN...ANYTHING ELSE FOR YOUR BIGGEST FAN?
I'm guessing you've given up handshakes.


WHY YOU...
LITTLE...!

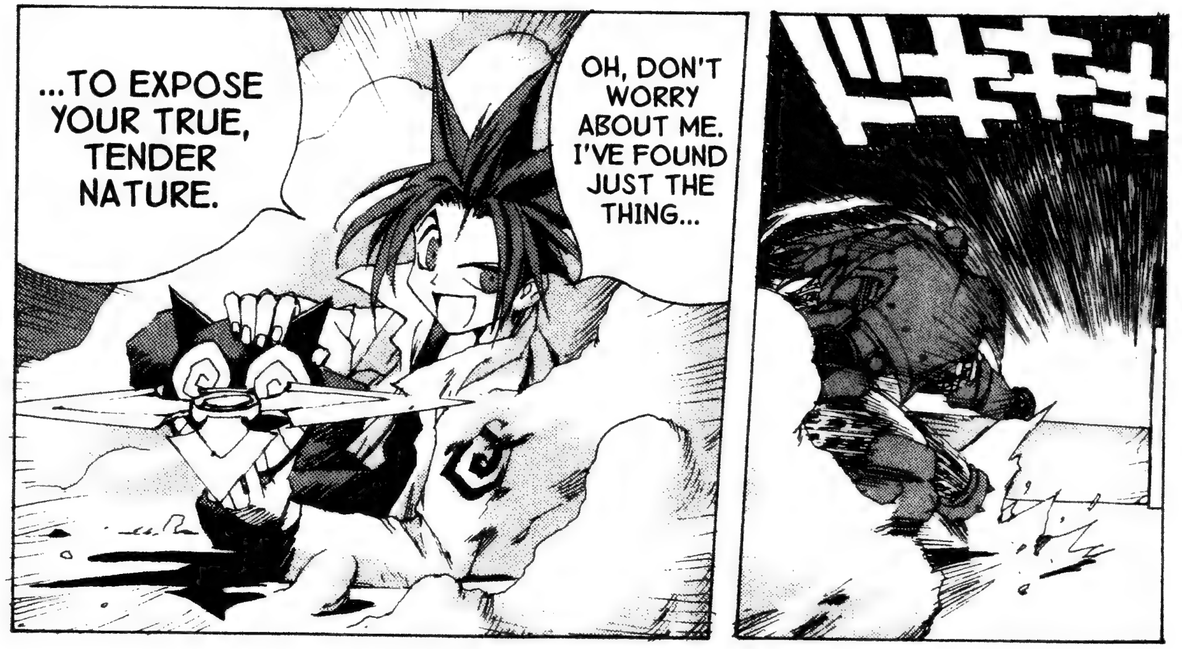
OOH, QUITE AN UNEXPECTED TURN OF EVENTS!! LOOKS LIKE OUR YOUNG LAD HAS DUNDAR WRAPPED AROUND HIS LITTLE FINGER.
M... MADEMOISELLE... WATCH OUT!
AW, PUT A CORK IN IT!!!
OOOO

KA-CHING!
SHUKA!
RRIPPP!
!
HANG ON, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN-- A PERFECT YATONO-KAMI MANEUVER!! TO MEET DEATH BY SUCH A LEGENDARY MOVE WOULD BE AN HONOR INDEED!!

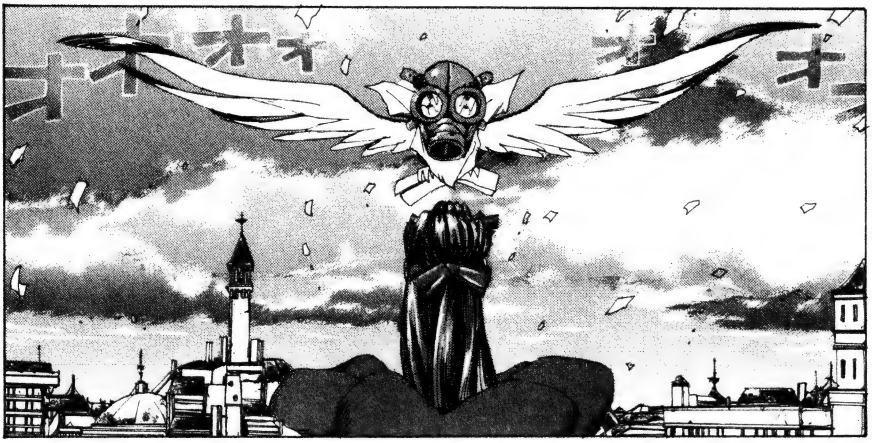
THINK NOTHING OF IT! IN FACT, FEEL FREE TO MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME...IN THE AFTERLIFE!!
YEAH... THANKS FOR THE WINNING HOSPITALITY!
OH!!
H-HUH?
!!?

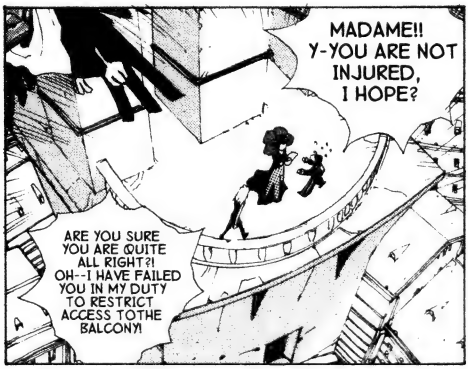
!?

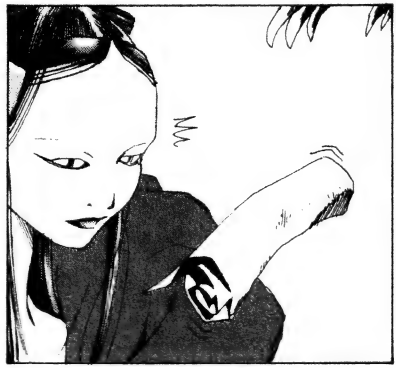
HAHAHA!
AWWWW!!

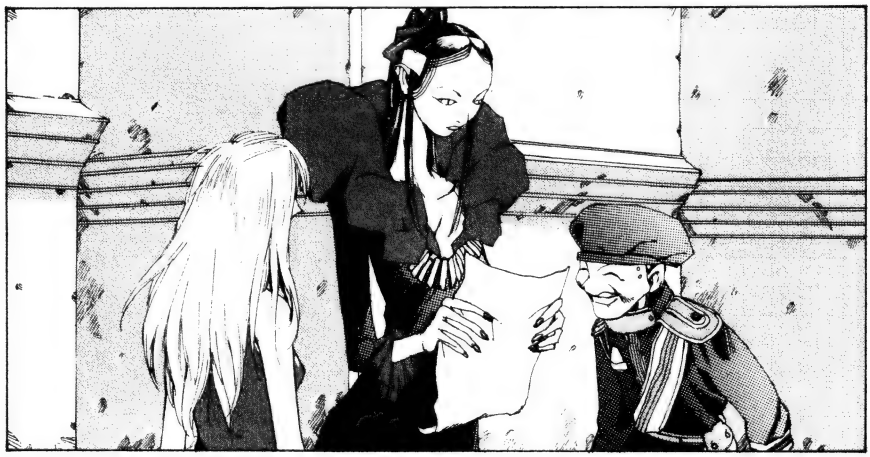

...TO EXPOSE YOUR TRUE, TENDER NATURE.
OH, DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME. I'VE FOUND JUST THE THING...

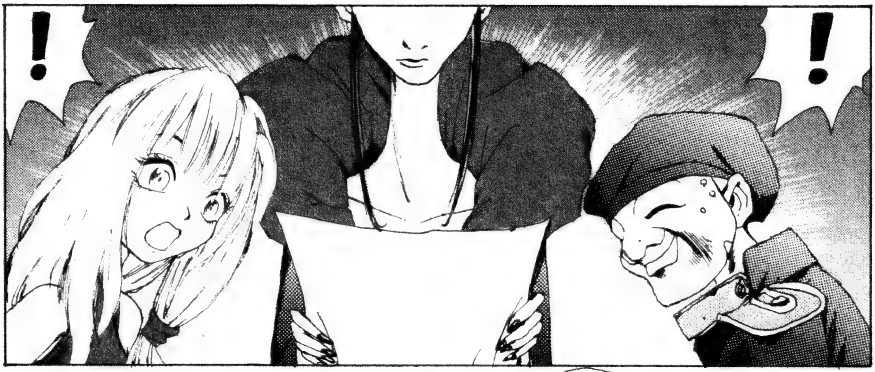
はははははは
GOD DAMN!
OHH!
COULD THIS MATCH BE OVER?! AFTER ALL, EVEN A LADY-KILLER LIKE DUNDAR WON'T HAVE MUCH HOPE OF IMPRESSING THE MADAME IF HIS DERRIERE IS EXPOSED!!
WAAH
DOOOOOR!




MADAME!! Y-YOU ARE NOT INJURED, I HOPE?
ARE YOU SURE YOU ARE QUITE ALL RIGHT?! OH--I HAVE FAILED YOU IN MY DUTY TO RESTRICT ACCESS TOTHE BALCONY!



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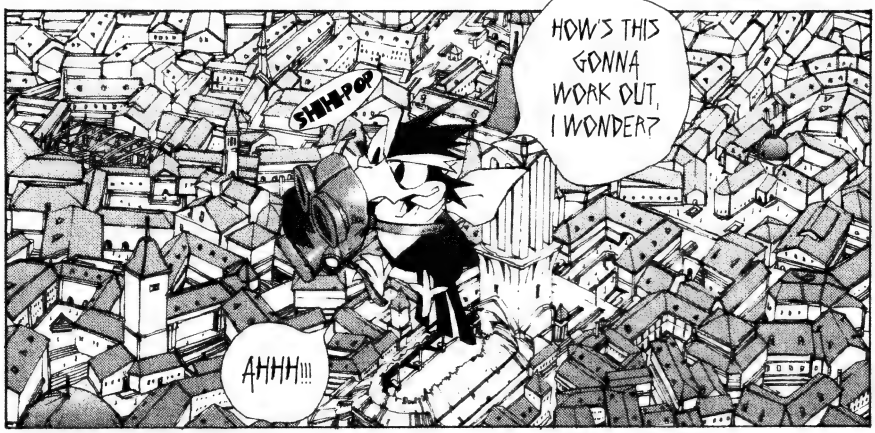
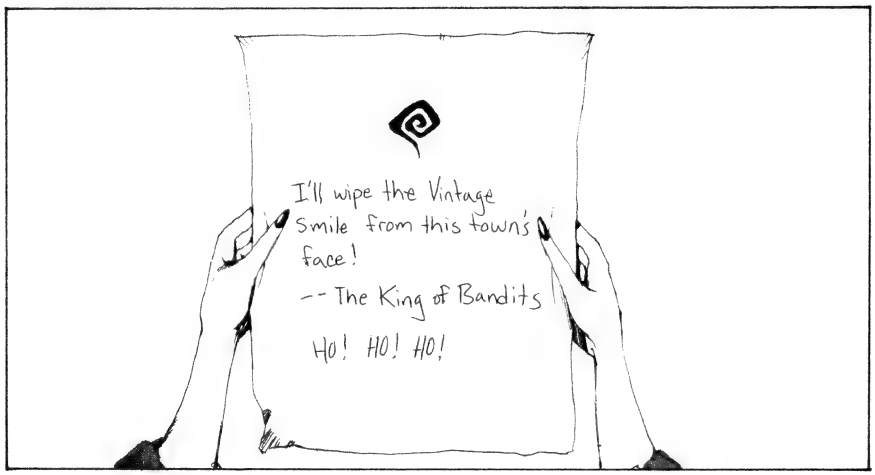
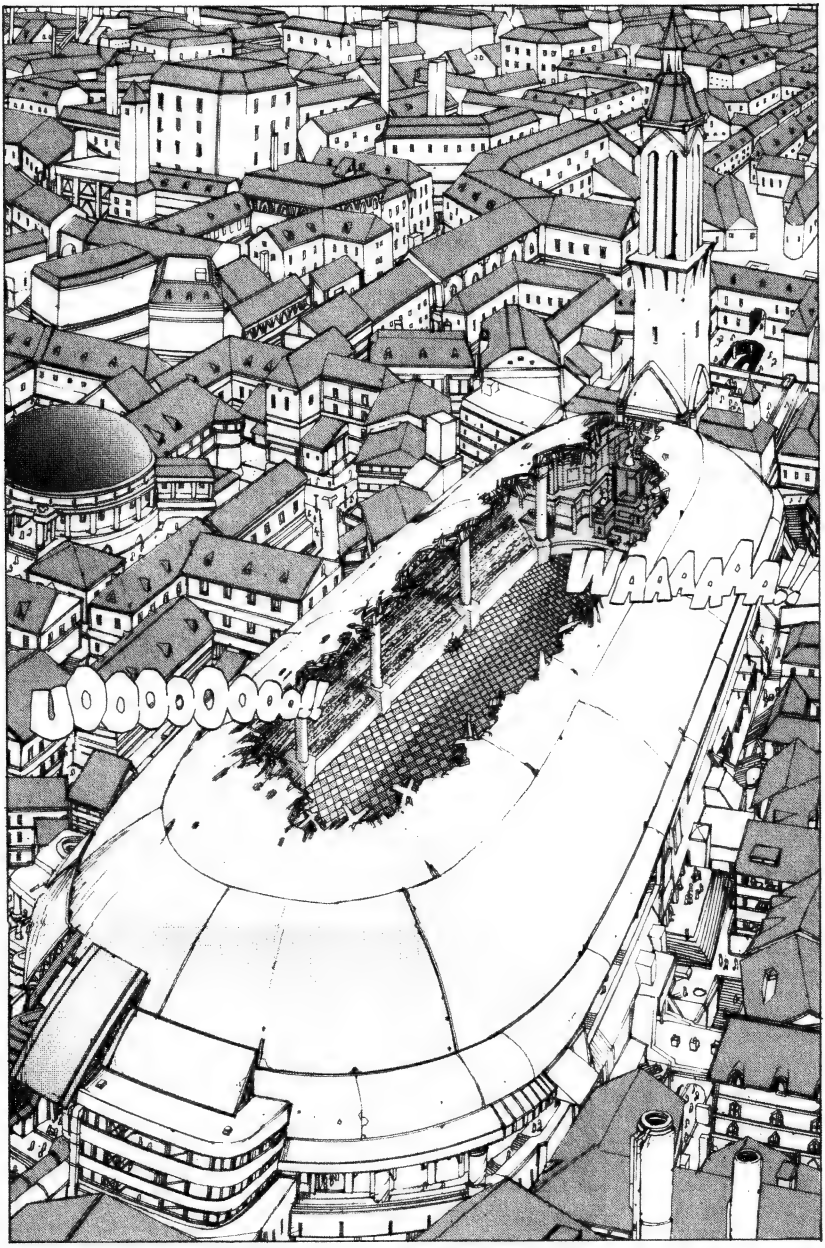

HOW'S THIS GONNA WORK OUT, I WONDER?
SHIHPOP
AHHH!!!

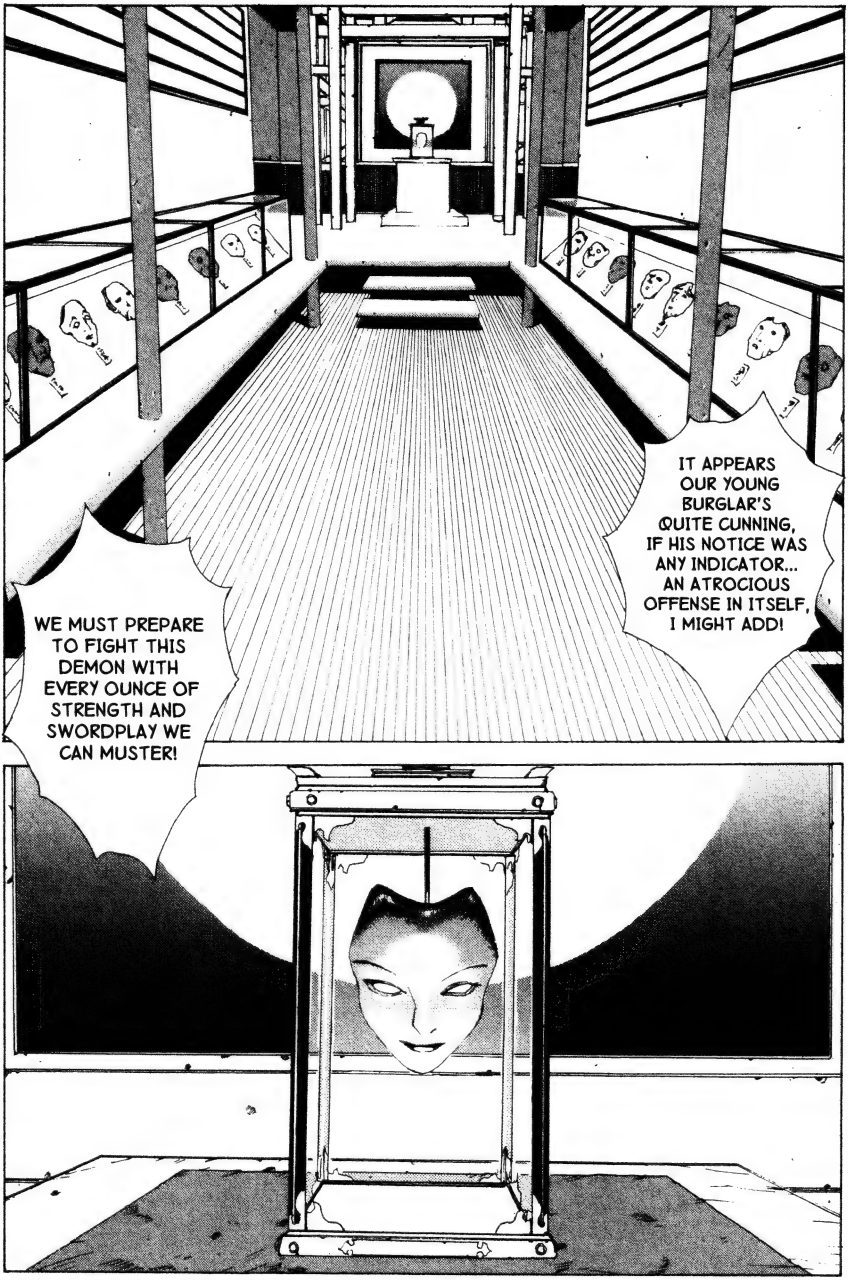

I'll wipe the Vintage Smile from this town's face!
-- The King of Bandits
HO! HO! HO!

20th SHOT - Vintage Smile

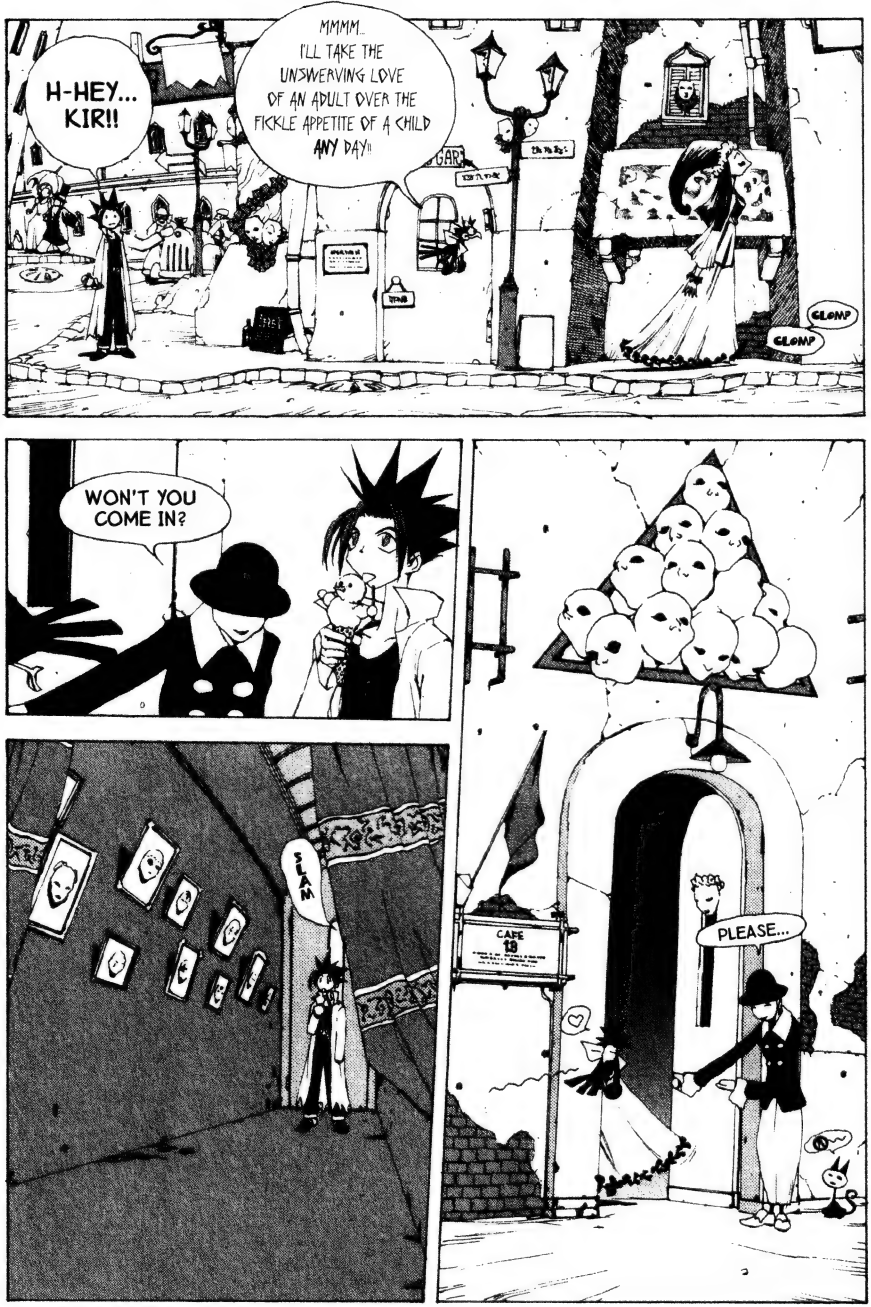


HE... HE CANNOT BE REFERRING TO MADAME'S MOST TREASURED MASK... THE ONE HAND-SHAVED FROM A COLOSSAL DEEP-WATER PEARL?!
...THAT VINTAGE SMILE?!
!?
THE SAME MASK THE MADAME WILL WEAR AT THE BREAK OF DAWN WHEN THE NEW HEIR IS CHOSEN...
YES, YES, WE GET THE IDEA NO MATTER HOW YOU SAY IT. JUST DON'T PANIC, OKAY, ROOKIE?!
THE V-VINTAGE SMILE?!
ALL RIGHT, EVERYONE...THAT *WAS* QUITE AN UNEXPECTED TURN OF EVENTS, BUT...ON TO THE NEXT BATTLE!
YOU THERE!

A PLOT IS AFOOT TO STEAL THE FAMILY TREASURE! WE MUST FORTIFY PROTECTION OF THE MASK ROOM IMMEDIATELY!!! HURRY--GO NOW!!
YOU KNOW WE'RE NOT GOING TO FIND A REPLACEMENT FOR LEMON... HE WAS YOUR OWN SON, AND MY YOUNGER BROTHER...!!
HONESTLY... THE VINTAGE SMILE...WHY NOT JUST GIVE IT TO HIM, MOTHER?
WELL, WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? LOOK ALIVE, MEN!!
M-MADEMOI-SELLE...I'M SURPRISED AT YOU! HOW CAN YOU SAY SUCH A SILLY THING...?
LET NO ONE VIOLATE THE MASK!!!


IT APPEARS OUR YOUNG BURGLAR'S QUITE CUNNING, IF HIS NOTICE WAS ANY INDICATOR... AN ATROCIOUS OFFENSE IN ITSELF, I MIGHT ADD!
WE MUST PREPARE TO FIGHT THIS DEMON WITH EVERY OUNCE OF STRENGTH AND SWORDPLAY WE CAN MUSTER!

DEMON...
DEVIL...
OGRE!!!
HEY...DIDN'T I TELL YOU NOT TO EAT THE CHERRY, JING?!!!
WHY? DID YOU POISON IT?
RIGHT, THEN... ASIDE FROM YOUR STOMACH, LITTLE KIR, OUR TOP CONCERN RIGHT NOW IS HOW WE'RE GOING TO TAKE THE VINTAGE SMILE. SO LET'S SEE... CARVING THAT FACE INTO A DEEP WATER PEARL WOULD REQUIRE THE SKILLS OF A MASTER CRAFTS-MAN...
EH?


H-HEY... KIR!!
MMMM.. I'LL TAKE THE UNSWERVING LOVE OF AN ADULT OVER THE FICKLE APPETITE OF A CHILD ANY DAY!!
GLOMP
GLOMP
WON'T YOU COME IN?
SLAM
CAFE 13
PLEASE...

MMOOO

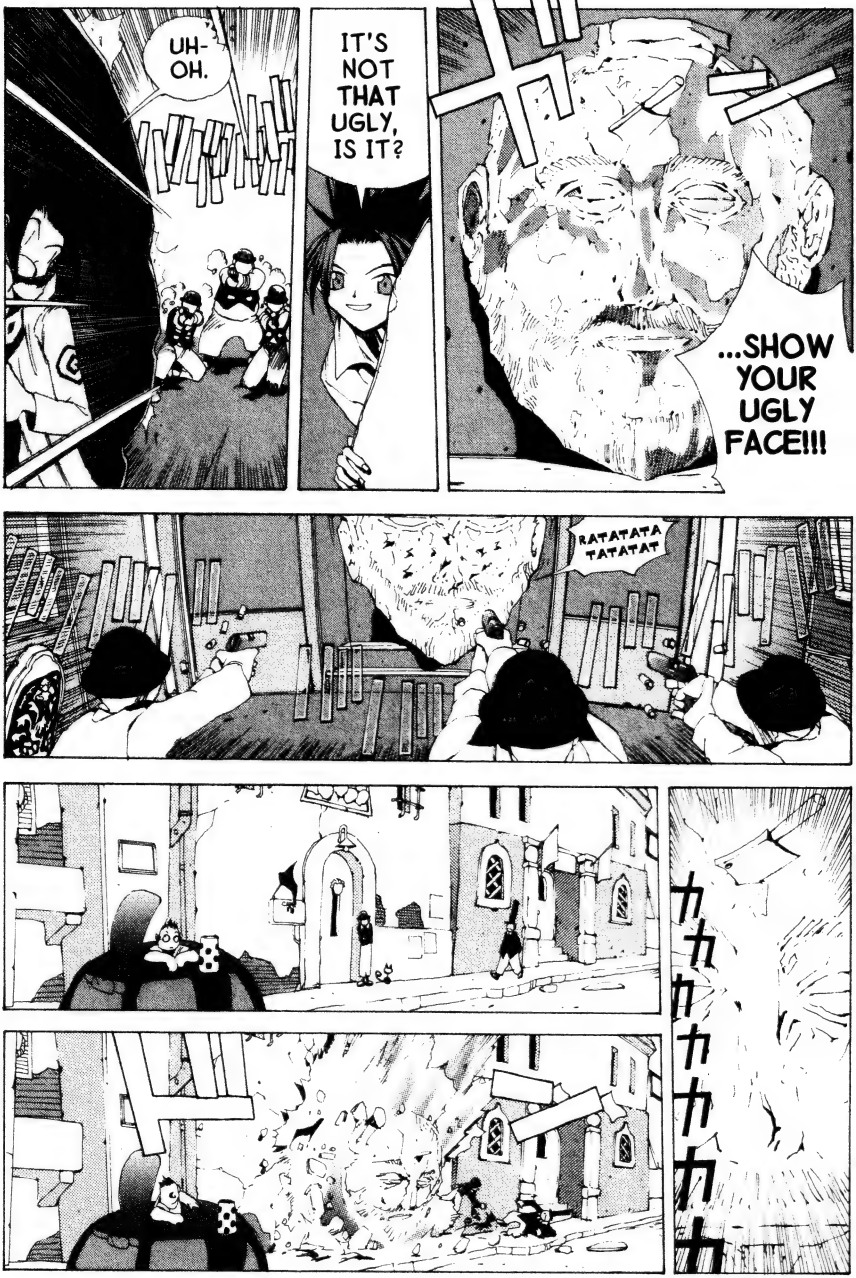
WHERE'S THAT VIXEN GONE OFF TO..?
S..SHE'S VANISHED... MY LADY...!
It's in the wrong hands...
HUFF
PUFF
HUFFF
MUOOO
ARE YOU MY ANGEL?!!
EEK!
Oh wow, it's my hero.
HUH ?!
WHAT'S THIS?! I SIT WITH A KALEIDOSCOPE OF THE FINEST LADIES... I SIT IN THE PALM OF THE HAND OF PARADISE... AND THEN...!

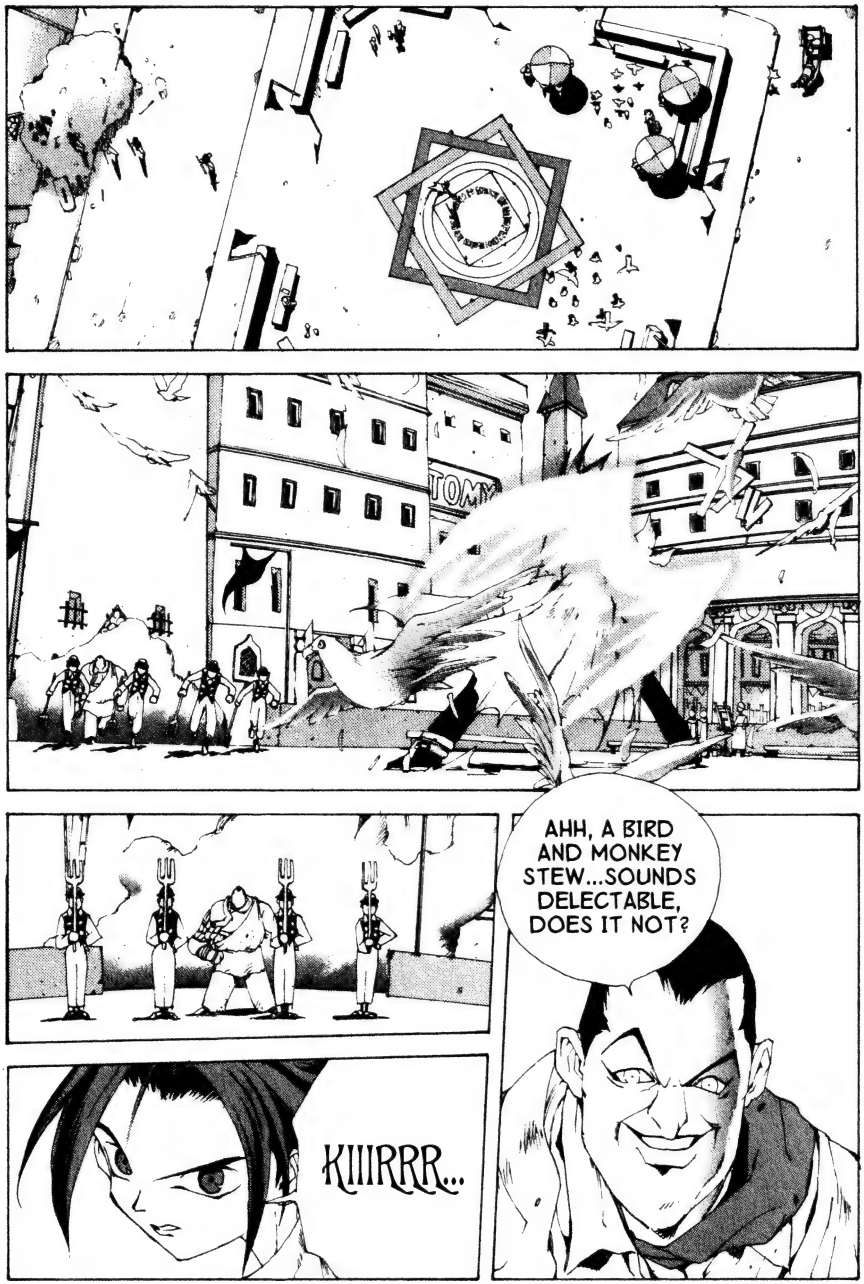
YOU AGAINNN!
!!!
WOOOOO
LITTLE BRAT!!
...YOUR GRAVE-STONE!
THAT'S IT, KIDDO...IN THE RING, I WAS BOUND BY THE RULES, AND I ACCEPTED DEFEAT. BUT THIS TIME, I DON'T NEED A GONG OR A REFEREE... ALL I NEED IS...
?

NOT ONLY WAS HIS BACKSIDE EXPOSED...BUT HE BROUGHT HIS DISGRACE UPON HIMSELF.
DUNDAR... SWEEEE-TIEEE...
GURI..
GURI..
LOOKING FOR THE SAME FATE, MONKEY BOY?
WHAT A WASTE!!

THIS TOWN IS A HAVEN FOR US ALL. EVERYONE WITHIN ITS WALLS IS BLESSED WITH ALL THE PLEASURES OF THE WORLD...THROUGH OUR NOBLE COUNTESS' GOOD GRACE!
DO-DO-AH!
DO-DO AH-AH!
...OR BE GROUND TO MINCEMEAT INSIDE!!
DO?
BUT THE OUTSIDER WHO DISCOVERS THAT SPECIAL PLACE MUST EITHER LET HIMSELF BACK OUTSIDE...
THEN I'D BETTER PLANT MY SEEDS, HADN'T I?
THE FLOWERS AND FRUITS OF PARADISE CAN'T BLOSSOM IF YOU'RE NOT ALIVE TO TEND THEM, EH?

NOW AREN'T YOU GLAD I'VE EATEN, KIR?! THAT CHERRY REALLY HELPED.
GAH !!!
CHOP
WHY YOU... LITTLE CHIMP-CHILD!!!
IN THIS HOLY SPACE...

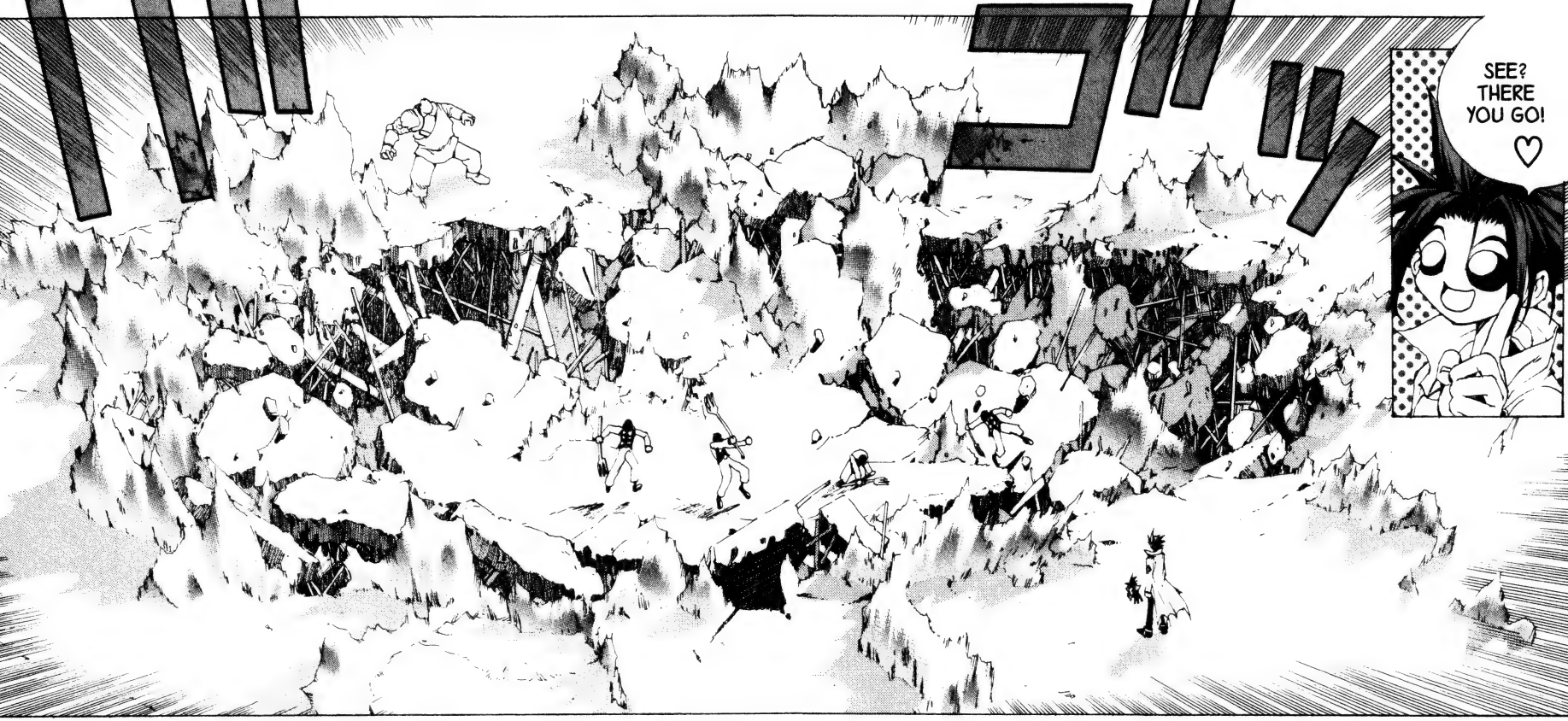

UH-OH.
IT'S NOT THAT UGLY, IS IT?
...SHOW YOUR UGLY FACE!!!
RATATATA TATATAT
カカカカカカ


AHH, A BIRD AND MONKEY STEW...SOUNDS DELECTABLE, DOES IT NOT?
KIIIRRR...

ROYA--?!
WHAT'S WRONG, KIR?
M_MY THROAT_
W_WHEN HE_
GRABBED IT
!?
WHAT'RE YOU NINCOM-POOPS DANCING FOR?!!! THIS ISN'T A BALL, Y'KNOW!
OHHHHHH...

Y-Y-YES, CHEF!!
EH, THOSE TWO ARE LOUSY SHOTS. THEY CAN'T HIT US!!
RUMOR HAS IT YOU CAME FROM A FAMILY OF WARRIORS... BUT YOU JUST GOT FAMOUS... BEING A LITTLE PUNK...DIDN'T YOU?
CURIOUS BYSTANDERS
HUH? WHAT'S ALL THE SHAKING?
CRACK
CRACK

DIDN'T YOU KNOW? THIS WHOLE PLACE'S FLOATING IN THE AIR, SUPPORTED ONLY BY PILLARS...
ズズズ
W-W-W-W-
WHAT'S HAPPEN-ING!?!
ズズズ
ゴゴゴゴゴゴ
...IN OTHER WORDS, AS THE OLD SONG GOES, "BELOW US ONLY SKY."
I'D WATCH MY STEP IF I WERE YOU...
HOOP
ゴゴゴ

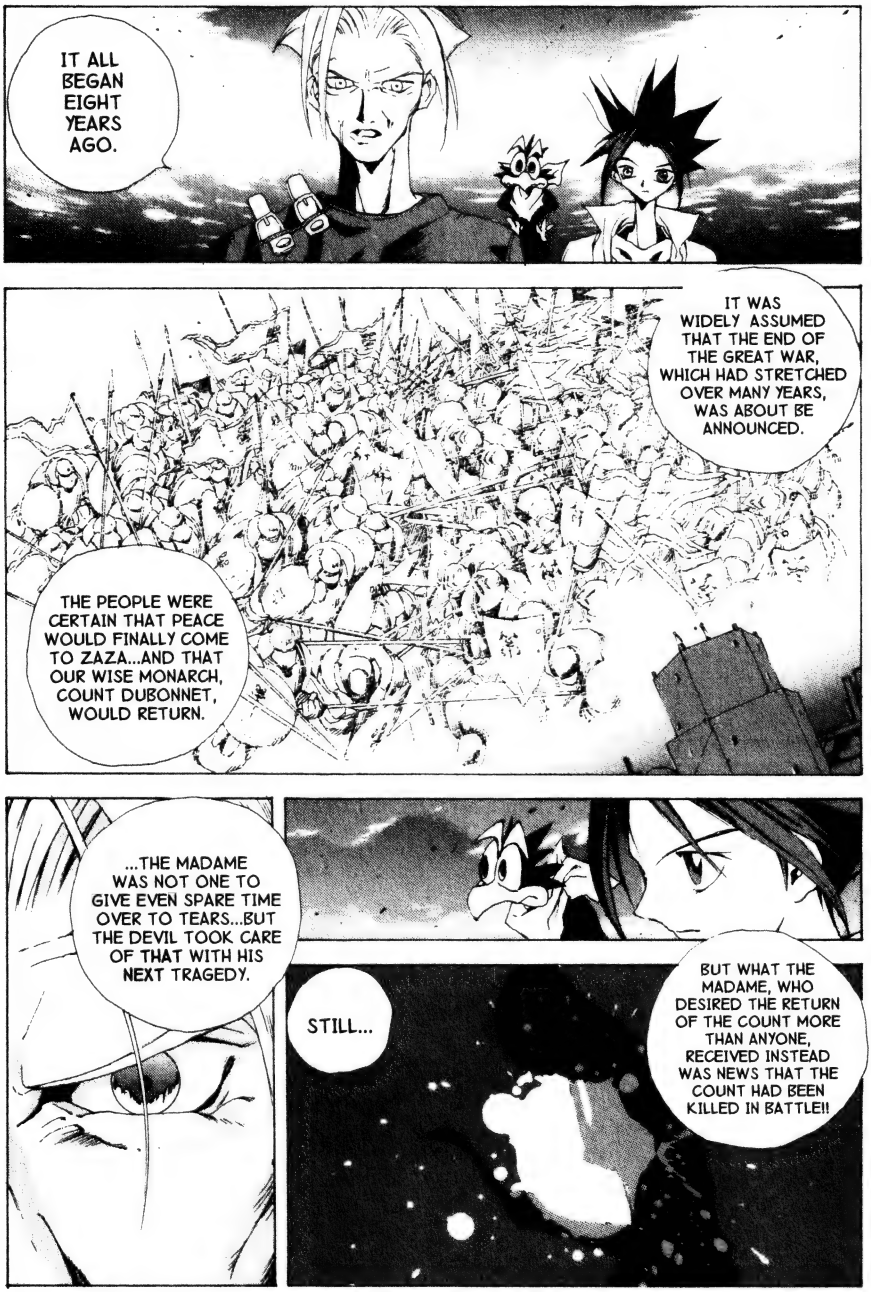

SEE? THERE YOU GO! ♡

BLACK POWER

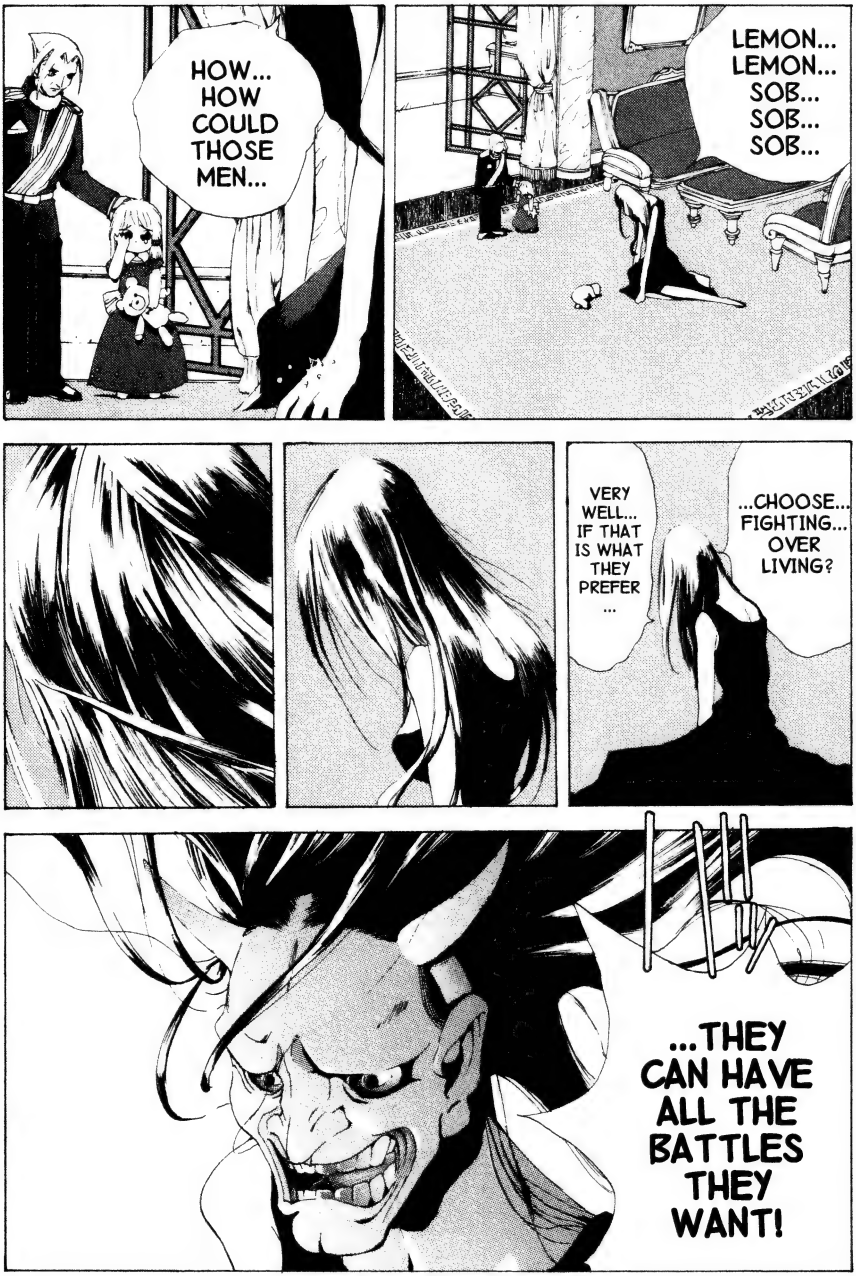
THAT'S ENOUGH!!!
A-ANGOSTURA SENIOR! THIS GUY... THIS GUY!!
IF YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY DETERMINED TO DO HIM IN, CHEF, I WILL BE FORCED TO CONFISCATE BOTH OF YOUR MASKS.
WELL, DON'T JUST STAND THERE!!!
FOLLOW ME, WHELP.

ウキッ
EVEN THE POLTER-GEISTS?
HEY, JING! I THINK THAT GUY AT THE MATCH WAS RIGHT...THIS ENTIRE TOWN IS BEING POSSESSED BY A GOD CALLED THE MADAME.
WHAT A TOWN THIS IS. EVERYONE IS WEARING THESE WEIRD MASKS.

WA-WA-WAH--
WHAT CAN YOU KNOW ABOUT IT?!!!
YOU FLAP YOUR LIPS AS THOUGH YOU KNEW THE MADAME--WITHOUT EVER HAVING KNOWN THAT FATEFUL DAY... THOSE MANY TEARS SHED IN THE NIGHT!
I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW THE MADAME HAS BEEN SHEDDING TEARS FOR MOST OF HER LIFE...
YOU MEAN... BY MADAME POKER FACE?


IT ALL BEGAN EIGHT YEARS AGO.
IT WAS WIDELY ASSUMED THAT THE END OF THE GREAT WAR, WHICH HAD STRETCHED OVER MANY YEARS, WAS ABOUT BE ANNOUNCED.
THE PEOPLE WERE CERTAIN THAT PEACE WOULD FINALLY COME TO ZAZA...AND THAT OUR WISE MONARCH, COUNT DUBONNET, WOULD RETURN.
...THE MADAME WAS NOT ONE TO GIVE EVEN SPARE TIME OVER TO TEARS...BUT THE DEVIL TOOK CARE OF THAT WITH HIS NEXT TRAGEDY.
STILL...
BUT WHAT THE MADAME, WHO DESIRED THE RETURN OF THE COUNT MORE THAN ANYONE, RECEIVED INSTEAD WAS NEWS THAT THE COUNT HAD BEEN KILLED IN BATTLE!!

...AND THE MURDERER WAS THE BABY'S UNCLE!!! NOT THAT HE WAS THE ONLY WICKED RELATIVE WHO HAD CONSPIRED TO DETHRONE HIM. MANY HAD DREAMED OF TAKING HIS PLACE AS HEIR.
MEANWHILE, THE MADAME HAD LOST HER LOVING HUSBAND AND CHERISHED SON, ONE AFTER THE OTHER!
ゴクッ
MADAME'S YOUNG SON, LEMON, WAS FOUND DEAD... KILLED BY POISON!! THE CHILD WAS ONLY THREE YEARS OF AGE...
...HAUNTS MY MEMORY TO THIS DAY!!
THE PATHETIC FIGURE OF THE COUNTESS ON THAT NIGHT...

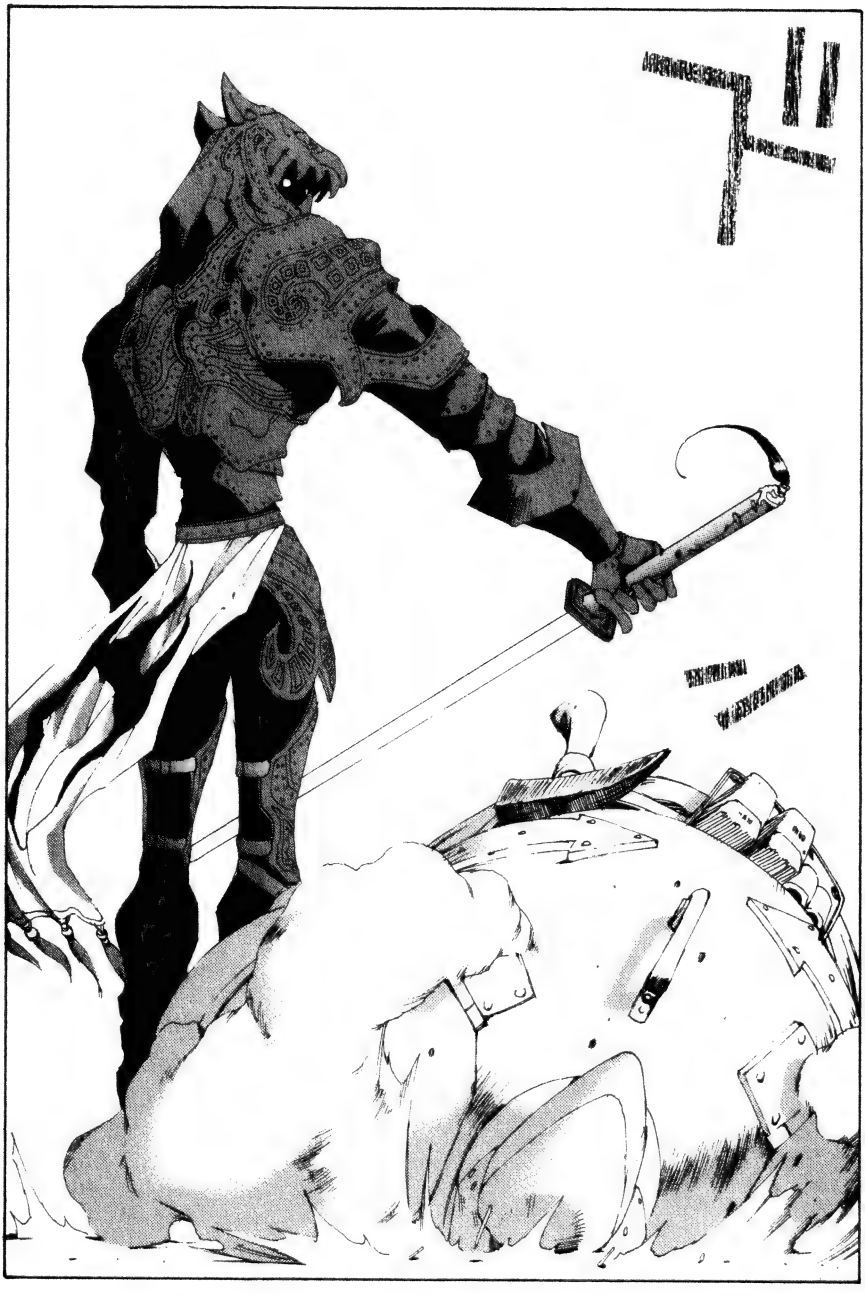

HOW... HOW COULD THOSE MEN...
LEMON... LEMON... SOB... SOB... SOB...
VERY WELL... IF THAT IS WHAT THEY PREFER ...
...CHOOSE... FIGHTING... OVER LIVING?
...THEY CAN HAVE ALL THE BATTLES THEY WANT!

THEY SHALL BATTLE FOREVER !!!

FROM THAT DAY FORWARD, THE MASKED BALL THAT WAS HELD EACH YEAR WAS SWITCHED TO THE FORM OF A FIGHTING ARENA...
...IN THE NAME OF FINDING A REPLACEMENT FOR LEMON... WHICH NO ONE EVER EXPECTS TO HAPPEN.
H-HEY... WHAT'S GOIN' ON OUT THERE?!
AH--BIG BRUDDER!!
WHAT'RE YOU DOING? FINISH HIM!!!
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF

WELL, IT LOOKS LIKE ANOTHER BIG SURPRISE IS IN STORE!! BETWEEN THE THREE FAMOUS ICE BROTHERS, CUBE D. ICE, WHO HAS WELL EARNED HIS NICK-NAME, "THE LANDLORD OF HELL," HAS SHOWN UP...BUT WHERE IS HIS OPPONENT?!
COME OUT... C-COME OUT!!
OR DO I HAVE TO FIND YOU MYSELF?!!!
CUBE!! ARE YOU PLANNING ON MAKING ALL THREE OF US WEAR MASKS OF SHAME?! GAHH!

WAAAH!!!



HEY, JING... DIDJA HEAR THAT? THE RING GOT ALL QUIET ALL OF A SUDDEN, JING?
AHH... WHAT ON EARTH... HAPPENED THERE?

KING OF BANDIT JING

21st SHOT - THE WARRIOR OF THE RISING SUN

AAAA

"HE HAS SUDDENLY APPEARED AT THE MAS-CORRIDA..."
DRUG STORE
WARRIOR OF THE RISING SUN, EH...
RISING SON!!
FOR CHAPPED CRACKING
YEAH, YEAH.
HEY, JING!! LET'S HURRY UP AND GET THE VINTAGE SMILE... IF THAT IS ITS REAL NAME...
...BEFORE YOU CONFRONT THIS HOODLIGAN. BUSINESS BEFORE PLEASURE, YOU KNOW!
ポン ポン
Excellent Double Action
KATHUO
GUM
AAAAAHHH!
UH, OH.
OOH, LOOK!! IT'S THAT BOY FROM THE ARENA!!!

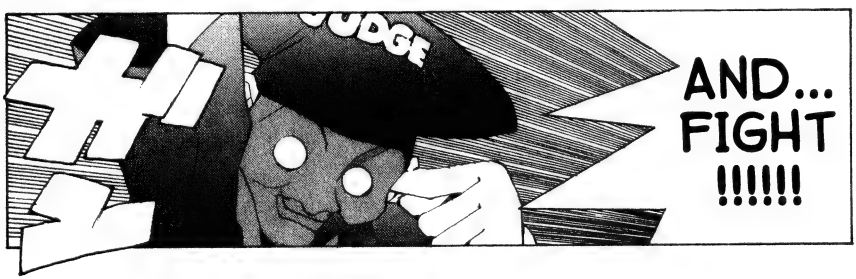
DOES HE HAVE A GIRLFRIEND? YOU CAN TELL ME!
WHAT'S HIS FAVORITE FOOD? HIS HOBBIES? HIS HEIGHT AND WEIGHT???
HEY, ARE YOU HIS MANAGER?
キャアー!!
BUT OF COURSE, OF COURRRSE!
NEVER FEAR, FAIR MAIDENS-- I ASSURE YOU, HE WON'T DISAPPOINT! AHAHAHA!
NEXT COMPETITION'LL BE ANOTHER EASY WIN, RIGHT? RIGHT?
Ask my manager.
H-HEY...
NOW, THEN! IF YOU WANT TO HELP OUR YOUNG HERO, TELL YOUR FRIENDS, ENEMIES AND EVERYONE ELSE YOU KNOW TO ROOT FOR THE ONE AND ONLY JING, KING OF GLADIATORS!!
キャキャー!

SORRY, I GOTTA BREAK CHARACTER. C'MON-- WHAT'D YOU EXPECT?! HE SPRANG TOWARDS THE FIGHTING RING LIKE A COMET...
DON'T YOU KNOW THERE'S NO STOPPING THE YOUNG GENIUS JING AND HIS LIGHTNING-QUICK ATTACKS?!
YAWN
OF COURSE OUR YOUNG WUNDERKIND, WHO HAS ALREADY MAGNIFICENTLY CLEARED TWO ROUNDS WITH HIS INNATE STRENGTH AND AWESOME TECHNIQUE...
HE'S SHOOTING TO THE TOP OF THIS TOURNAMENT LIKE A COMET, AND CLEANING UP EVERYONE IN HIS PATH!
...WOULD WIN HIS THIRD ROUND WITH JUST AS LITTLE DIFFICULTY!!
NOW, THEN... ALREADY IN THE EYE OF THE STORM AMONG JING'S CHALLENGERS...

...A BATTLE BETWEEN THE TWO WILL BE INEVITABLE.
...THE WARRIOR OF THE RISING SUN HAS MADE AN IMPRESSIVE SHOWING OF HIS OWN. AT THIS RATE...
...THE IMPORTANT PART OF THE COMPETITION IS CERTAINLY ABOUT TO BEGIN!!
WELL, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WHETHER OR NOT THIS WILL PROVE TO BE THE SHOWDOWN OF DREAMS THAT EVERYONE EXPECTS IT TO BE...
ZIPPO!
SHEESH... I STEP AWAY FOR ONE MINUTE, AND...

YO.
HEY THERE!!
SO, WE MEET AGAIN! WITH YA IN JUST A BIT.
ドスッ
ドスッ
...AND HERE COMES THE CHALLENGER WHO WILL FACE HIM... GINJOU!!!

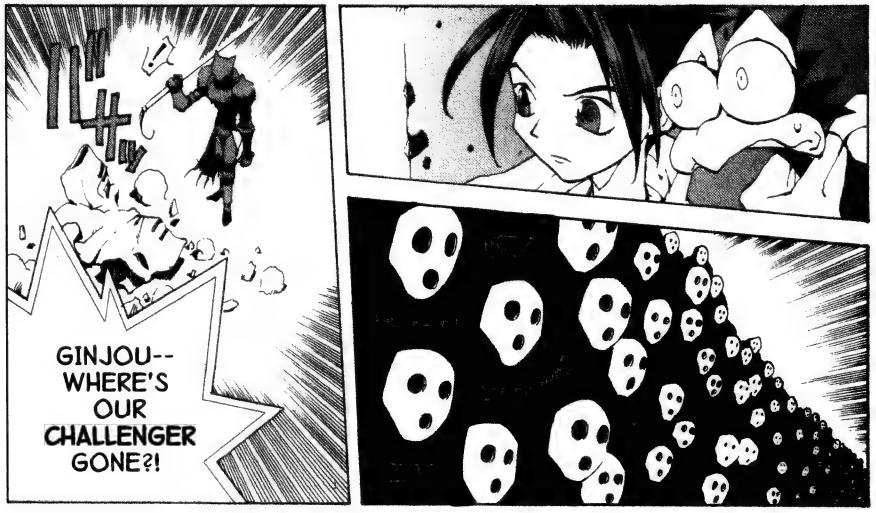
Woooooooooo
Gulp...

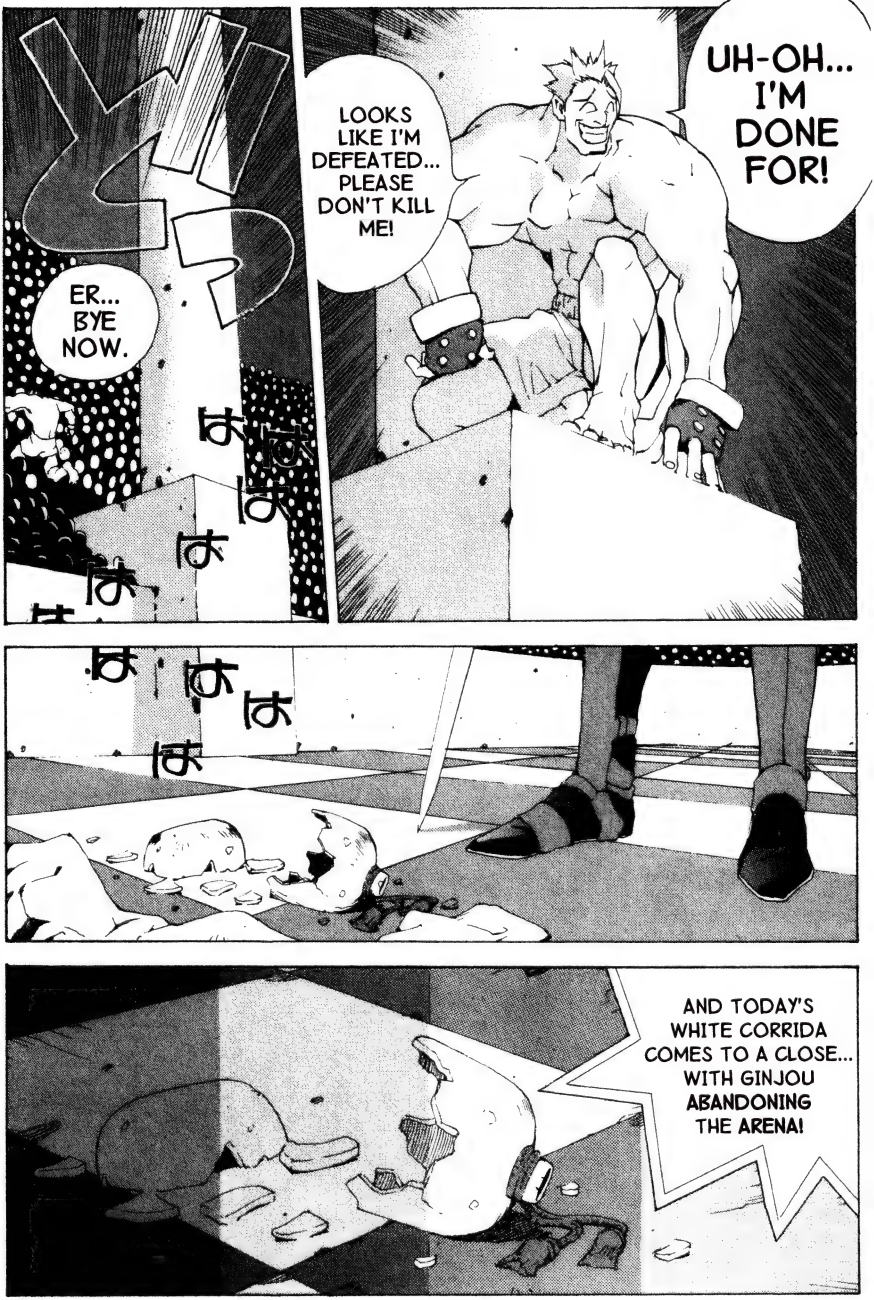

AND...
FIGHT
!!!!!!

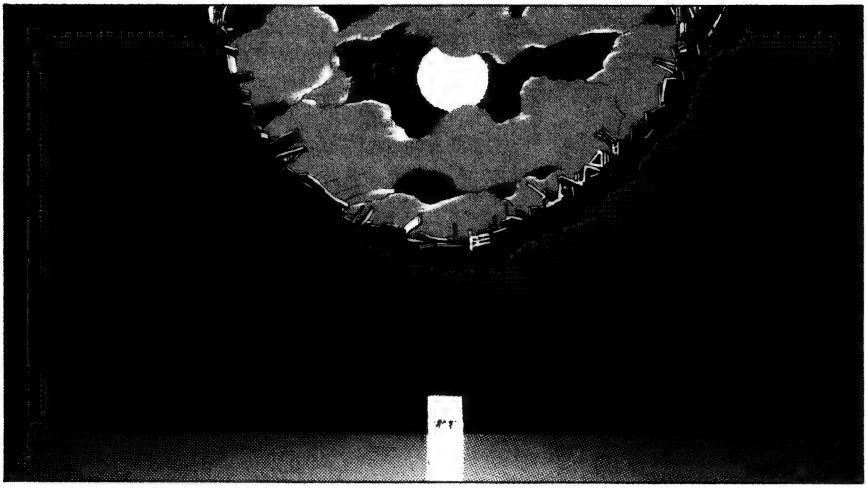
WHOOOAAA! LOOK AT THOSE FLAMES!! GINJOU IS USING HIS FAMOUS *SPITTING WOLF* ATTACK-- CONVERTING PURE ALCOHOL INTO ACTUAL FLAMES AND FIRING THEM AT HIS OPPONENT!!!

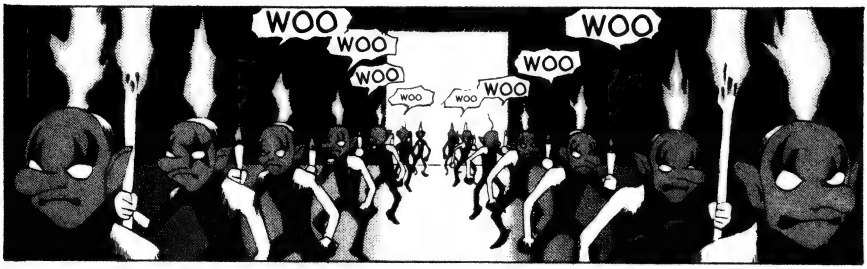
IT'S NOT WORKING... EVEN MY EXTRA-HIGH PROOF GINJOU SAKE IS ACTING LIKE STRAWBERRY MILK ON THIS OPPONENT!!
FOO
HUFF
FOO
BUT WHAT ABOUT THIS?!!!
VERY GRACEFUL, SIR...YOU DANCE LIKE A GIRL.

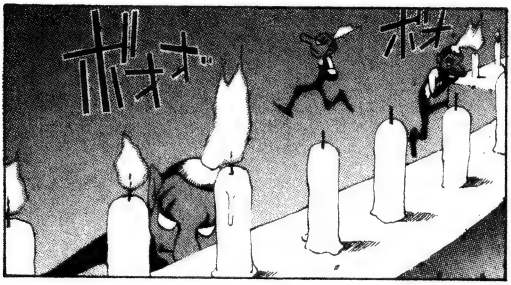
UOOO
OOOOO
OOOOH!!!


GINJOU--
WHERE'S
OUR
CHALLENGER
GONE?!


UH-OH... I'M DONE FOR!
LOOKS LIKE I'M DEFEATED... PLEASE DON'T KILL ME!
ER... BYE NOW.
はは
はは
はは
AND TODAY'S WHITE CORRIDA COMES TO A CLOSE... WITH GINJOU ABANDONING THE ARENA!




WOO
WOO
WOO
WOO
WOO
WOO
WOO
WOO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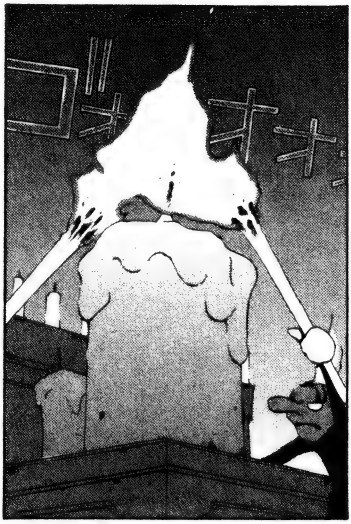
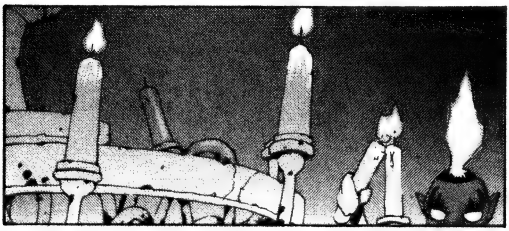
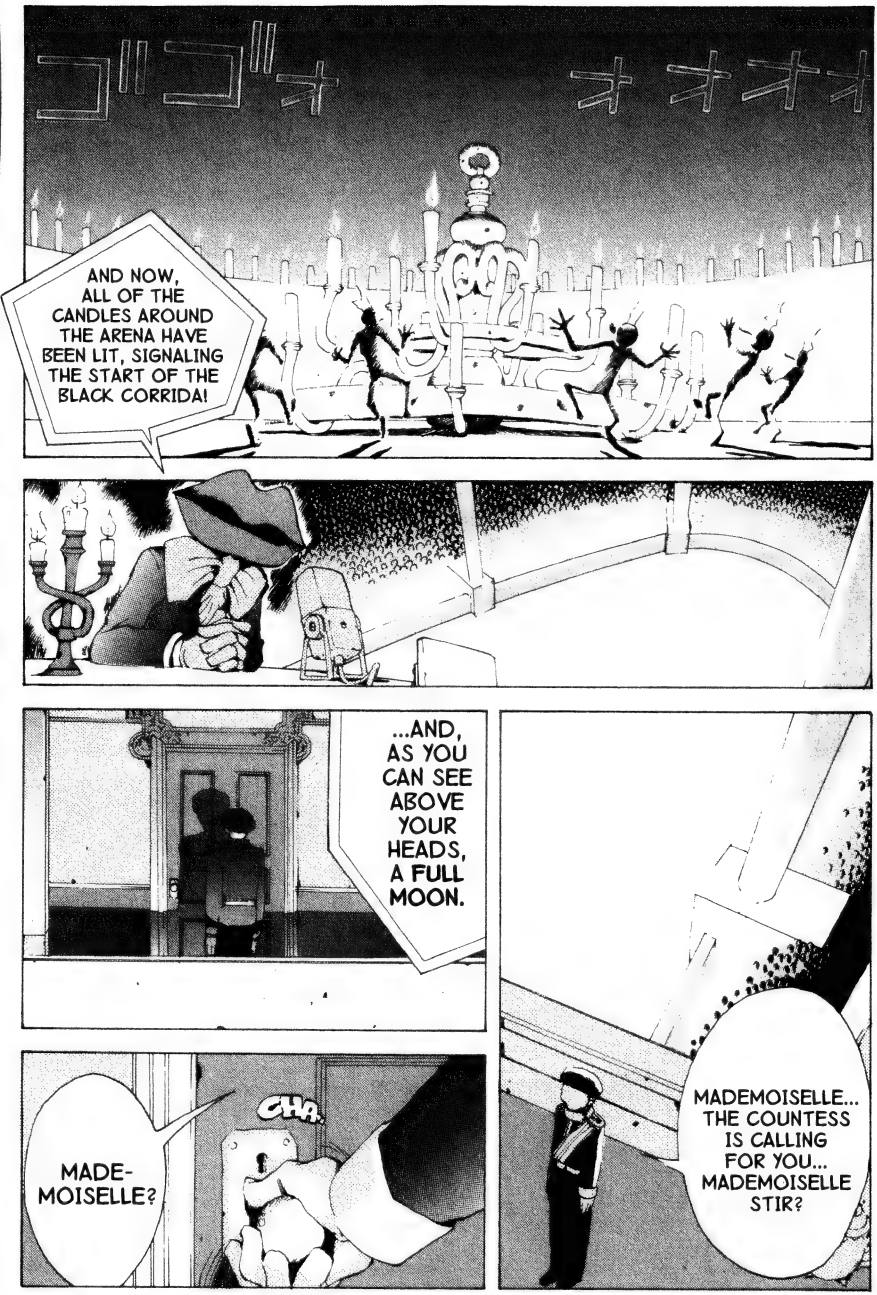
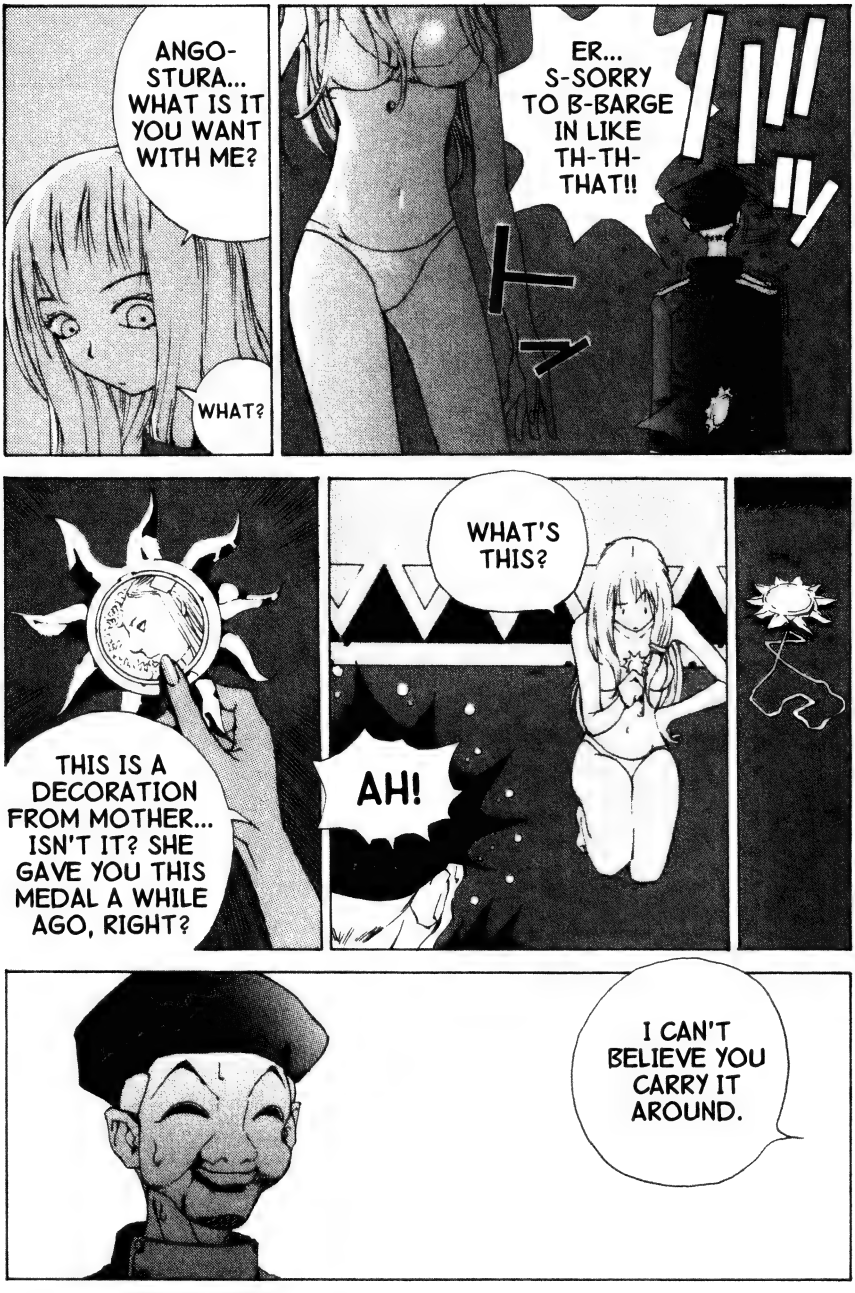
ボォオ…





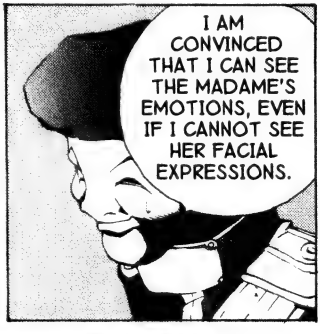

AND NOW, ALL OF THE CANDLES AROUND THE ARENA HAVE BEEN LIT, SIGNALING THE START OF THE BLACK CORRIDA!
...AND, AS YOU CAN SEE ABOVE YOUR HEADS, A FULL MOON.
MADEMOISELLE... THE COUNTESS IS CALLING FOR YOU... MADEMOISELLE STIR?
CHA.
MADE-MOISELLE?

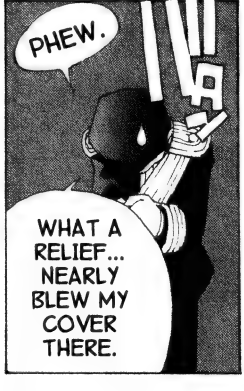
!!?
WHAT IS IT?

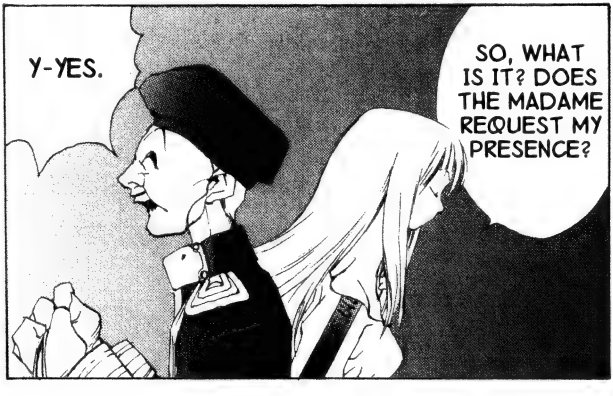

ANGO-STURA... WHAT IS IT YOU WANT WITH ME?
WHAT?
ER... S-SORRY TO B-BARGE IN LIKE TH-TH-THAT!!
THIS IS A DECORATION FROM MOTHER... ISN'T IT? SHE GAVE YOU THIS MEDAL A WHILE AGO, RIGHT?
WHAT'S THIS?
AH!
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU CARRY IT AROUND.

I MEAN, YOU'RE ONLY WATCHING OVER AN EXPRESSION-LESS GHOST.

YOU'RE SUCH A GOODY TWO-SHOES.
HOT


I AM CONVINCED THAT I CAN SEE THE MADAME'S EMOTIONS, EVEN IF I CANNOT SEE HER FACIAL EXPRESSIONS.


PHEW.
WHAT A RELIEF... NEARLY BLEW MY COVER THERE.


Y-YES.
SO, WHAT IS IT? DOES THE MADAME REQUEST MY PRESENCE?

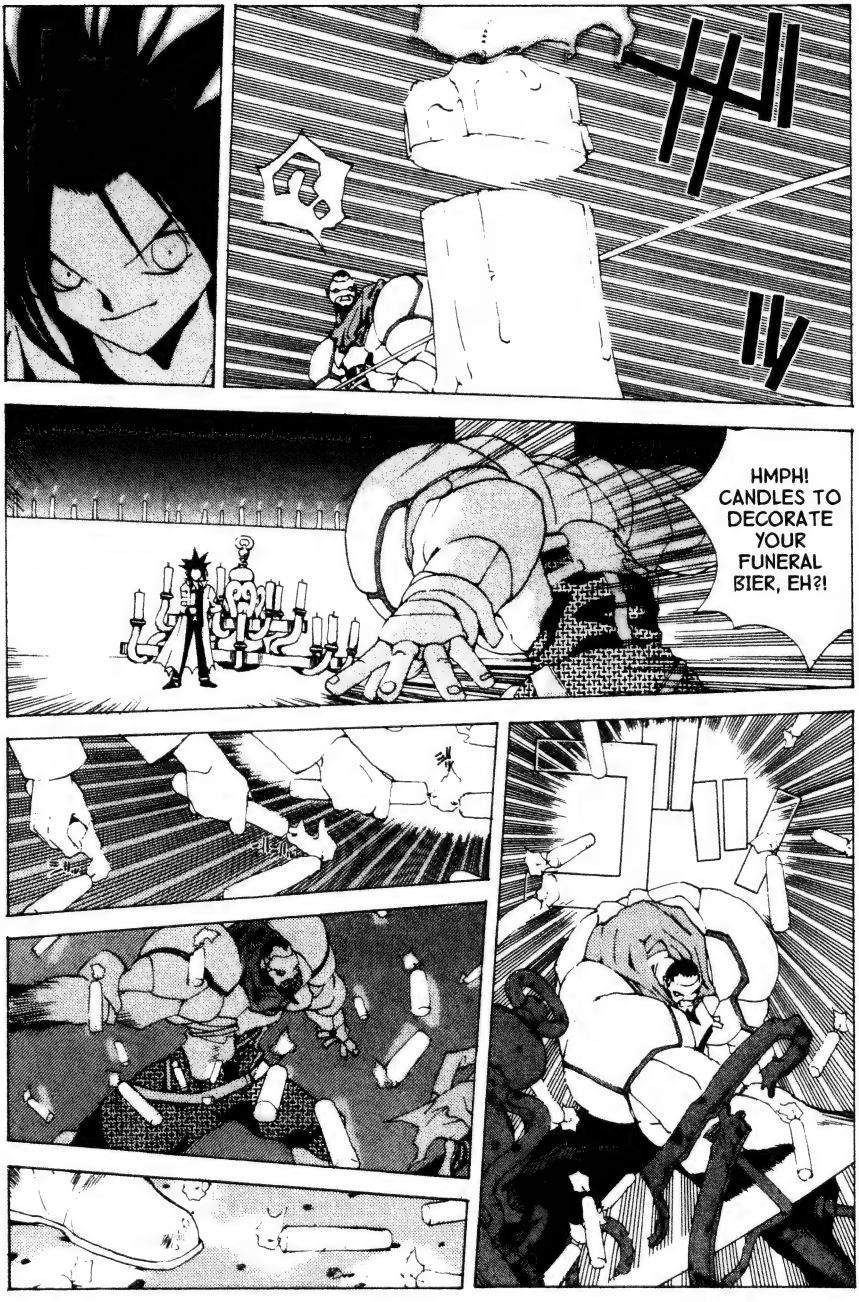
YOU MIGHT NOT LIVE TO REGRET IT.
I DON'T THINK MADEMOISELLE WOULD BE SO PITYING IF SHE KNEW WHAT THIS REALLY WAS.
HIS BLOWS SMASH RIGHT THROUGH ARMOR, JING!! A MATCH AGAINST HIM'S AN ACT OF SUICIDE!!
THERE HE IS!!
!!
HE MEANS BUSINESS MORE THAN WE MEAN PLEASURE... COME ON!

AAAAA
AAAAA
HHH!!!
¿¡¡¡
!!?
SAY... YOU'RE UP AGAINST ONE OF THE ICE BROTHERS NEXT, AREN'T YOU? PROMISE ME YOU'LL BE OKAY!
OKAAAY?
I THINK YOU FORGET WHO YOU'RE TALKING TO! ER, WHOM-- SORRY.
C'MON!! LET'S WATCH THE MATCH AND TOAST OUR FUTURE VICTOR!!!
HA HA
Uoooooooooooo

YEEAGH !!!!!!!!
FIGHT !!!!!!
.....
?!
THOSE CLOTHES OF YOURS... THEY'RE A LITTLE TOO SMALL FOR YOU.
BUT DON'T WORRY--I'LL MAKE 'EM FIT WITH MY LAND-MARK TECHNIQUE... THOUGH IF IT WERE ME, I'D RATHER HAVE ILL-FITTING, CLOTHES. HUFF...HUFF.

Y'SEE, I'M GONNA MAKE 'EM FIT... BY SNIPPING 'EM OFF YOUR BODY!!

BUR
HOW YOU GONNA HIDE FROM THE TOOL OF MY TRADE? AMATEUR!!
CRUSH D. ICE ALTERS EVERY OPPONENT'S ATTIRE INTO A COSTUME FIT FOR DEATH... THROUGH SHEAR DETERMINATION. HA!
WAAAAH!!
SOME CALL HIM THE TAILOR OF DEMON CITY!!
シャル


HMPH! CANDLES TO DECORATE YOUR FUNERAL BIER, EH?!

BJOOOO...
AHH... IT LOOKS LIKE JUDGMENT HOUR HAS COME AT LAST, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.
STAYING UP LATE AND PLAYING WITH FIRE... WHAT A NAUGHTY CHILD YOU ARE!!
BJOOOO...
...I'LL REDESIGN HIS SUNDAY BEST--IN DEEPEST RED!!
IF BLADES SPINNING AT SUCH A HIGH SPEED CAN'T DO THAT LAD IN...

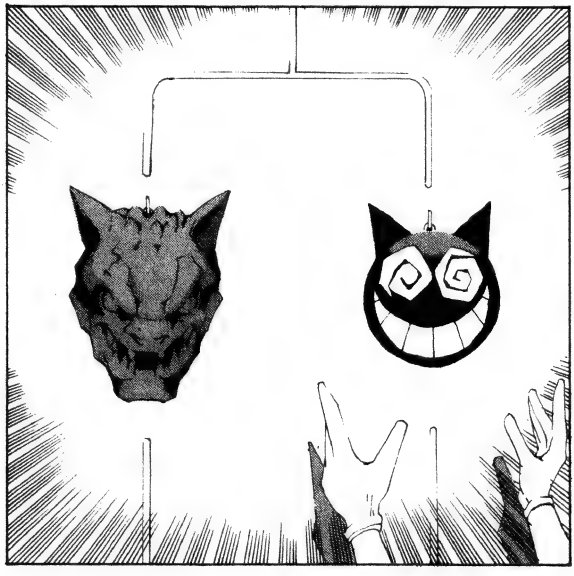
UHH...HN... WHAT?!
!?
OHHHH, I SEE. WITH THAT MUCH FIRE AROUND, IT'S GONNA BE PRETTY **HOT** IN THE MIDDLE OF THAT ARENA.
AND I BET IT'S LIKE A **DOUBLE**-BOILER INSIDE THAT **ARMOR**!!
THE TAILOR'S PRECIOUS TOOLS HAVE **BACKFIRED** ON HIM!!
FOO
FOO
FOO

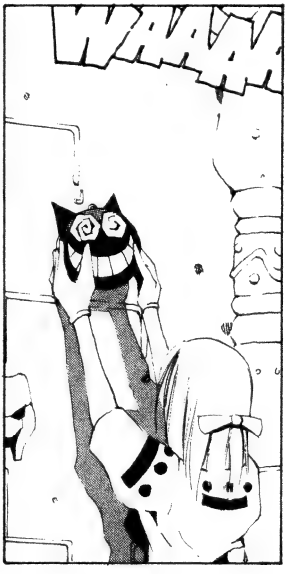
WHAAT?!!

AND IN SCARCELY THE BLINK OF AN EYE... THE TABLES ARE TURNED!!

ZUMUU!

ONCE AGAIN, OUR PINT-SIZED PALADIN PROVES HIMSELF NOTHING SHORT OF A MIRACLE-WORKER!!
キャー
キャー




WAAAA

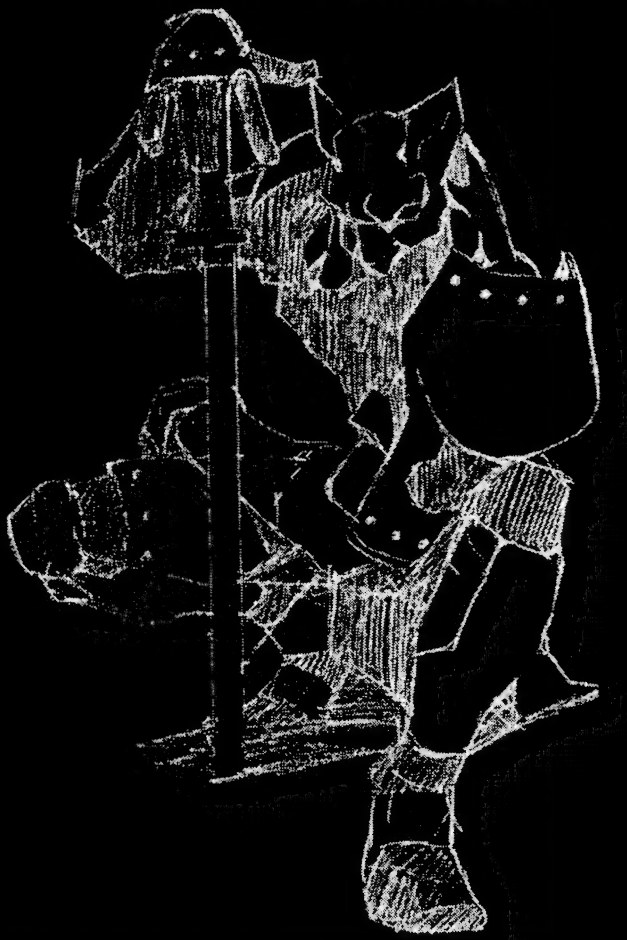
As Intense as the Rising Sun!!

Will Mystery Contestant be Zaza's Next Heir?

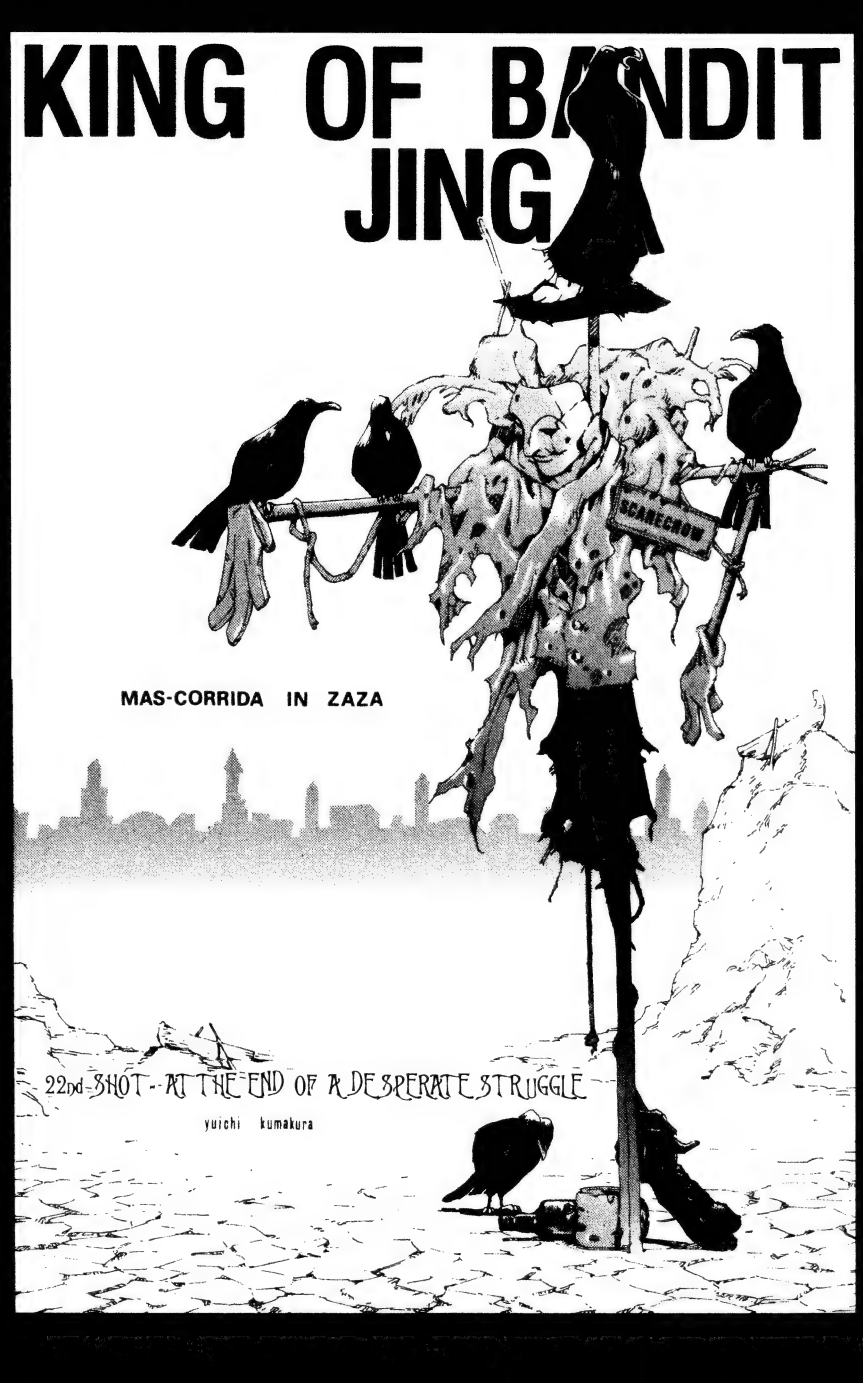
A strange assassin appeared at Sunday's Mascorrida, the likes of which the tournament had never seen. The mysterious gladiator, enshrouded in armor so dark that it appeared his entire body was made of steel, left a most unusual and foreboding impression upon the crowd. The origins of this warrior, who just barely made the deadline for this year's match, are completely unknown. If we are to believe the few words the warrior has spoken of himself, his most recent living was as a mercenary in the East. Since the candidate's face is well-hidden inside that strongly built armor, it is impossible to read his expressions. Still, this somehow only intensifies the impression of sheer determination that radiates from his entire body. What is certain is that no other contestant has been able to withstand his advance in the rankings, and currently, no other candidate will face him willingly. Certainly, he has taken the city of Zaza by storm. This man seems as sure to rise as champion as the sun is sure to rise in the East.

It is easy to see how one of his caliber would become known as the Warrior of the Rising Sun.

(From a local Zaza Newspaper)



KING OF BANDIT JING



MAS-CORRIDA IN ZAZA

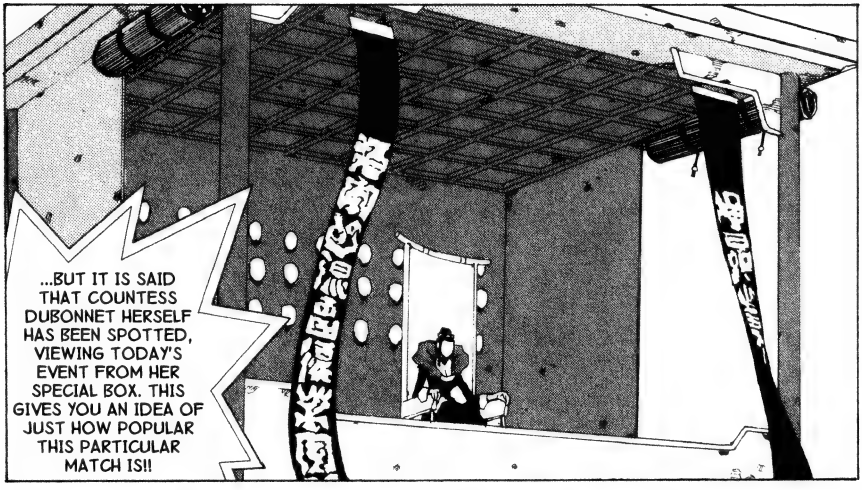
22nd SHOT -- AT THE END OF A DESPERATE STRUGGLE

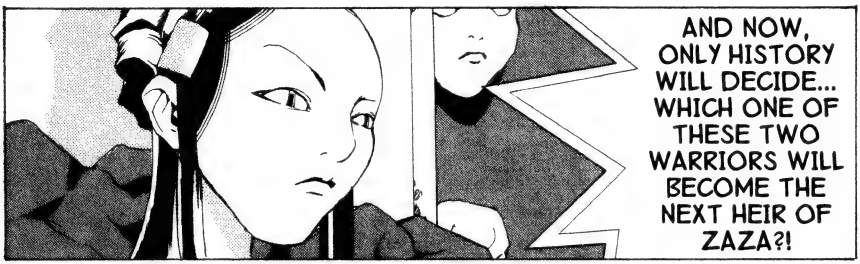
yuichi kumakura

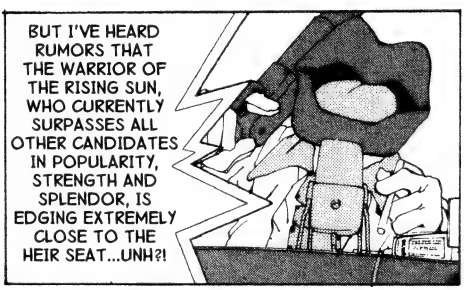
KING OF BANDITS, EH?
I WON'T BE WET BEHIND THE EARS FOREVER!! AND I'M WILLING TO STAKE MY LIFE FOR THE FAMILY TREASURE LIKE YOU NEVER COULD, GEEZER!!
AGAINST A SOFT-BOILED HATCHLING LIKE YOURSELF? I'D SAY WE'VE GOT NO WORRIES!
D-DON'T PATRONIZE ME, OLD MAN!!!!
BUT THIS YEAR, THE FAMILY TREASURE MAY ACTUALLY BE NEEDED. THAT IS, IF IT ISN'T STOLEN...
.....
YES... MADEMOISELLE STIR DOES RELY ON YOU FAR MORE THAN SHE SHOULD.
And don't call me geezer.

PATIENCE, GRASSHOPPER!! I'VE SIMPLY HEARD THAT IF THE POINTY-HAIRED BRAT WINS OVER ALL...OVERALL...HE MAY HAVE A FIGHTING CHANCE. BUT THEN, NOTHING'S SET IN STONE.
W-WAIT! ARE YOU SAYING THAT AN HEIR HAS ALREADY BEEN CHOSEN?!!!
ALL I'M SAYING... IS THAT IF LEMON WERE ALIVE TODAY, HE WOULD BE ABOUT THAT BOY'S AGE.
B...BUT ISN'T IT CUSTOMARY THAT THE TECHNICAL CHAMPION BECOME THE HEIR? WHY THIS SUDDEN CHANGE IN RULES?!
AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY ...

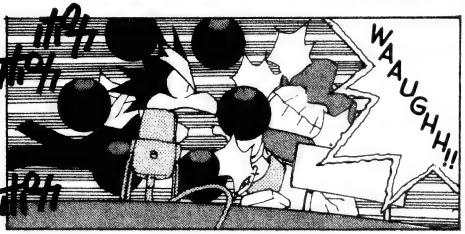
JUST HOW THIS MATCH WILL TURN OUT, NO ONE KNOWS. BUT THIS IS THE MOMENT WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR, FOLKS... THE CLASH OF THE DARK HORSES!
...THE BRAT IS A DEAD RINGER FOR THE COUNT IN HIS YOUNGER DAYS.
NOT ONLY HAS EVERY ZAZA RESIDENT TURNED OUT TO WITNESS THE STRUGGLE OF THIS CENTURY...
THE SEMI-FINALS, IN WHICH THE WARRIOR OF THE RISING SUN AND THE WEAPON-WIELDING WUNDERKIND WILL FIGHT TO THE FINISH, IS ABOUT TO COMMENCE!


...BUT IT IS SAID THAT COUNTESS DUBONNET HERSELF HAS BEEN SPOTTED, VIEWING TODAY'S EVENT FROM HER SPECIAL BOX. THIS GIVES YOU AN IDEA OF JUST HOW POPULAR THIS PARTICULAR MATCH IS!!

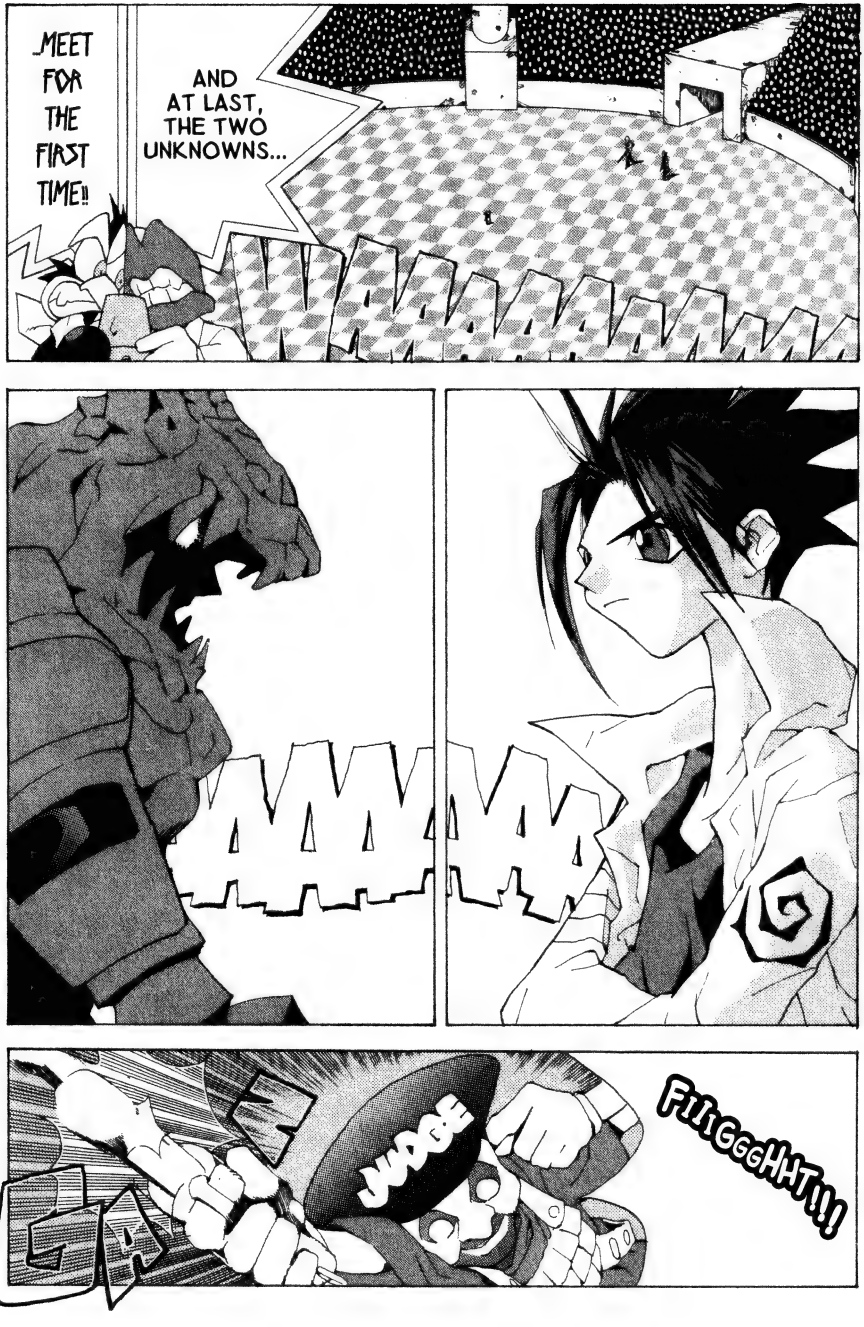

AND NOW, ONLY HISTORY WILL DECIDE... WHICH ONE OF THESE TWO WARRIORS WILL BECOME THE NEXT HEIR OF ZAZA?!

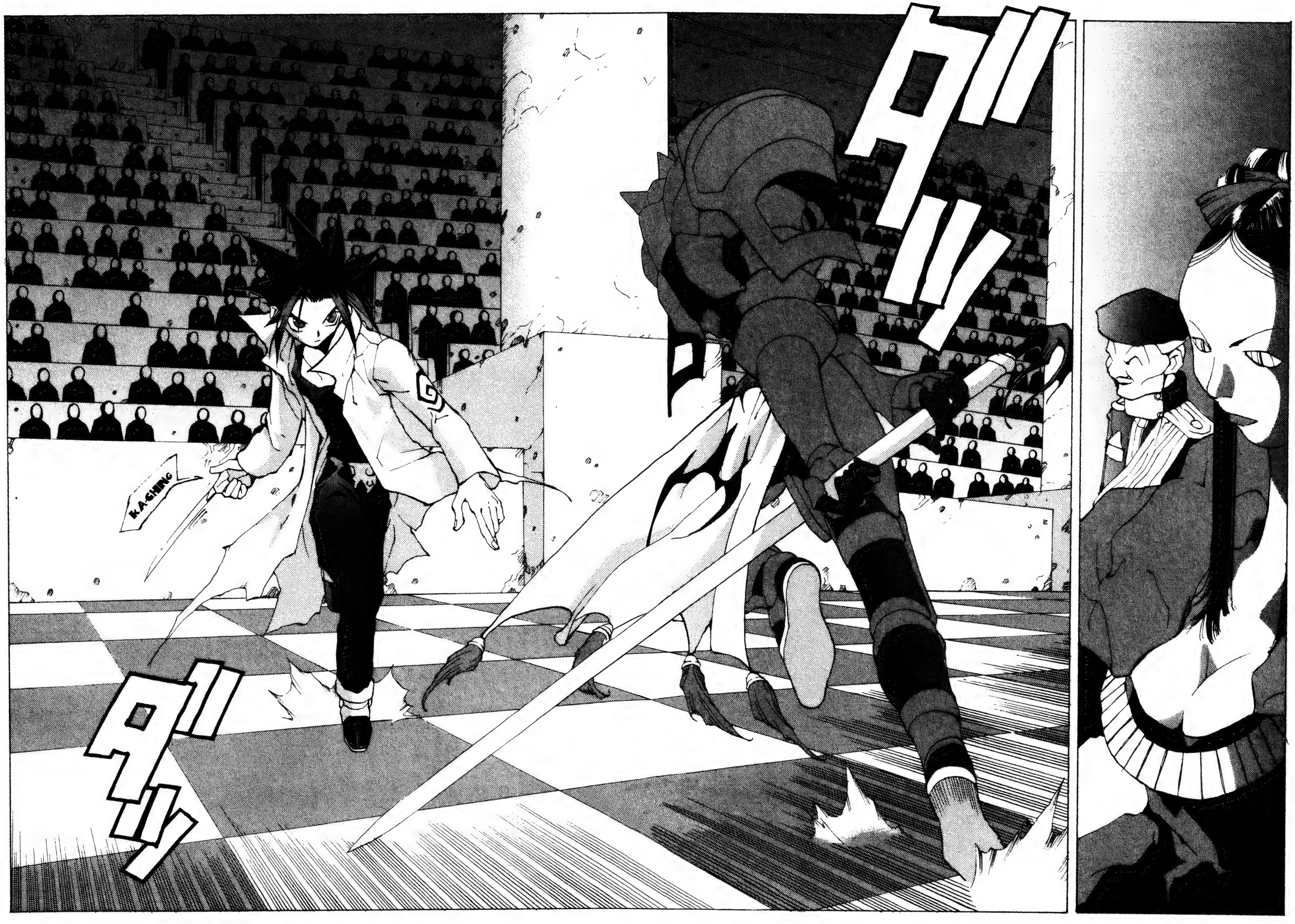

BUT I'VE HEARD RUMORS THAT THE WARRIOR OF THE RISING SUN, WHO CURRENTLY SURPASSES ALL OTHER CANDIDATES IN POPULARITY, STRENGTH AND SPLENDOR, IS EDGING EXTREMELY CLOSE TO THE HEIR SEAT...UNH?!

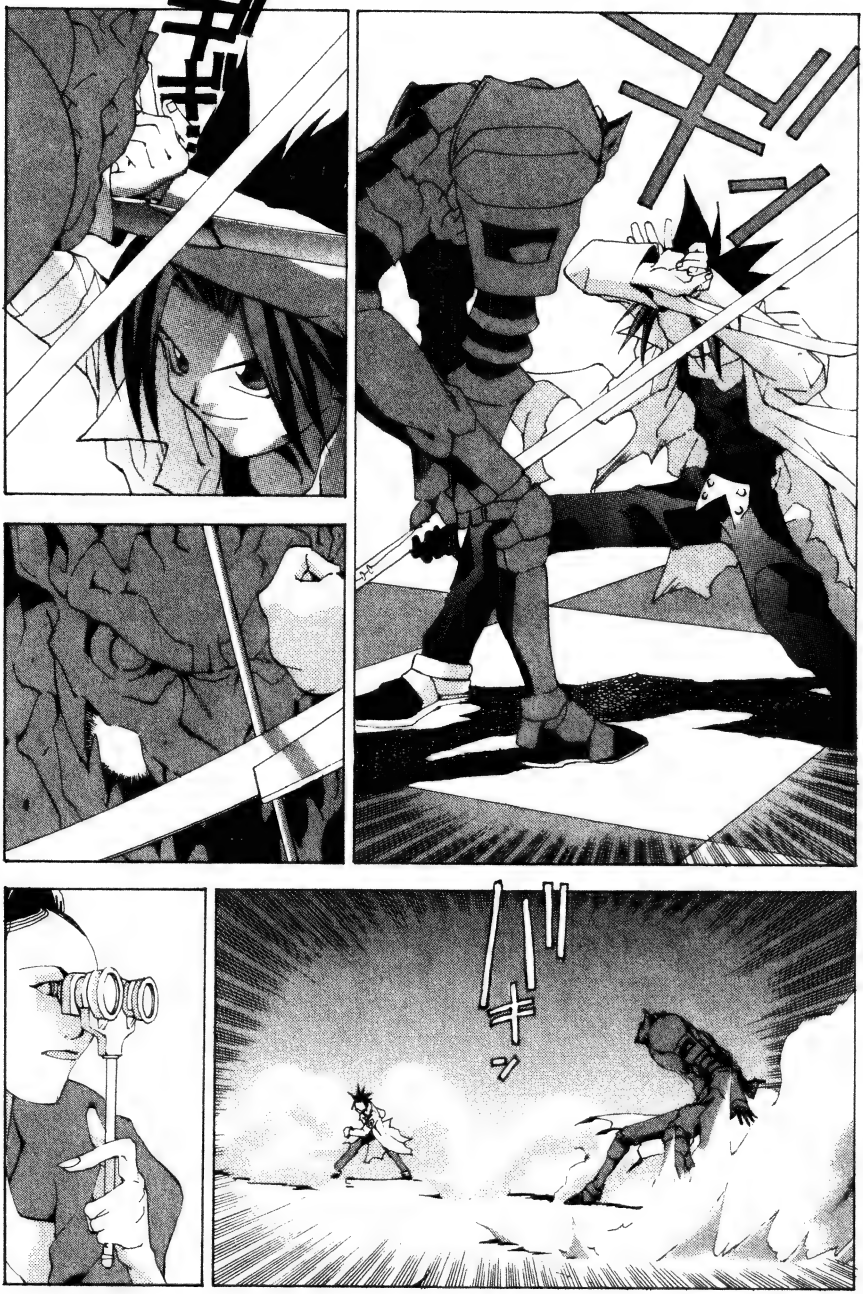
OF COURSE, THERE IS ONE MORE CANDIDATE WHO COULD STEAL THE THRONE FROM BOTH OF THEM. WE CANNOT FORGET BAFFLE D. ICE, WHO HAS ALSO ADVANCED TO THE FINALS!!


WAAUGHH!!

NOT TO MENTION THE FEMALE SPECTATORS' ABSOLUTE FAV--AGH--
BAM
UH, YES. AS I WAS SAYING, RUMOR HAS IT THAT THE EXTREMELY GIFTED CHILD, WHOSE NAME IS REPORTEDLY JING, IS A SHOO-IN FOR THE OVERALL WIN!
WHAT DID YOU SAY?!!!
WHY YOU GOOD-FOR-NOTHING-- I OUGHTA--!!
OF COURSE, THERE IS HARDLY ANY CHANCE FOR A LOW-BROW, YOUNG AND INEXPERIENCED CANDIDATE TO TAKE THE TITLE, EVEN IF HE IS POPULAR!!
I mean, come on...
AGHH!!


MEET FOR THE FIRST TIME!!
AND AT LAST, THE TWO UNKNOWNS...
FUUGGGHHT!!!


KA-CHING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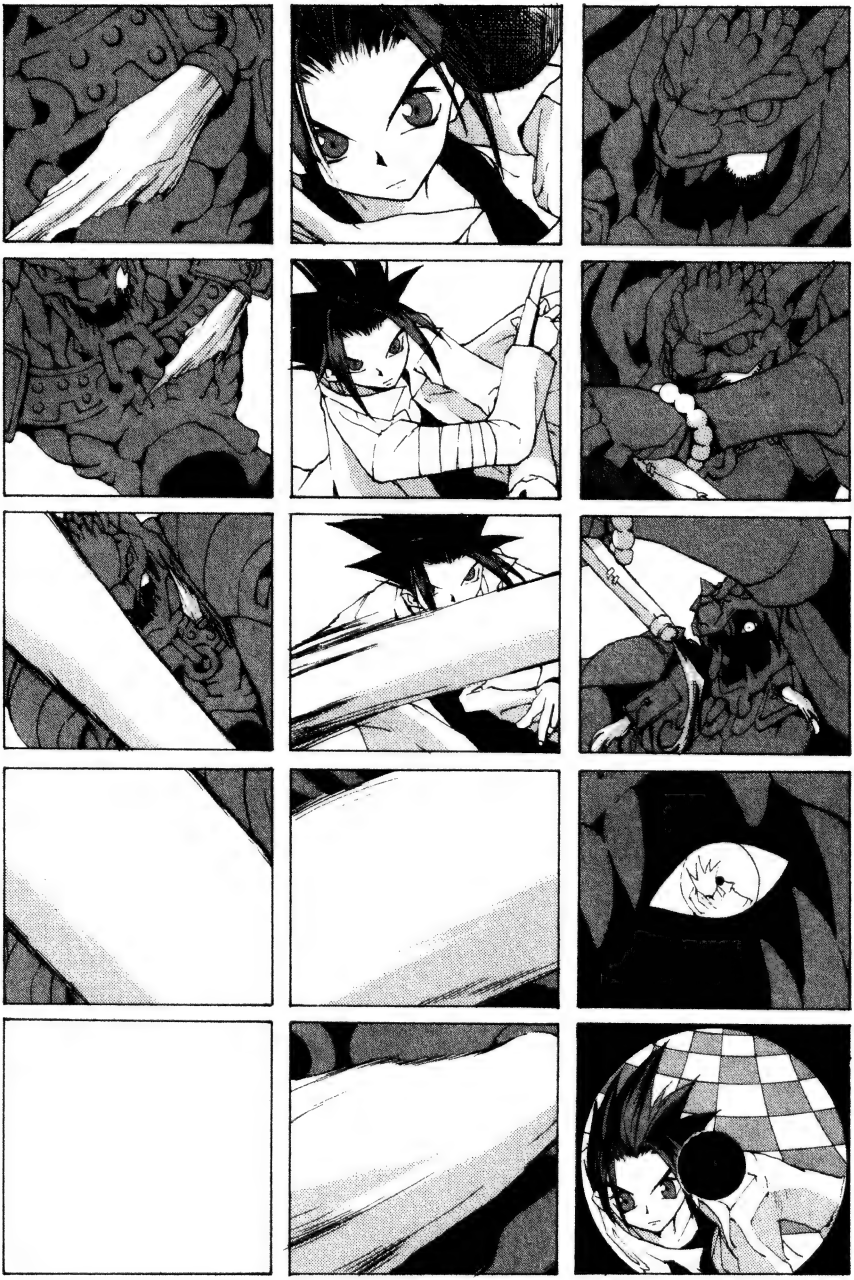
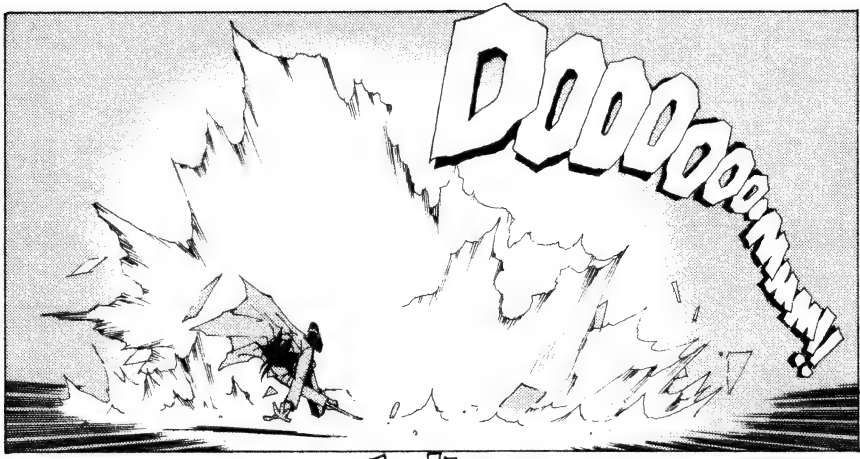
ACK
OOOH-- A SUDDEN, HEAD-ON COLLISION!! MANEUVERING AT LIGHTNING SPEED, NEITHER OF THESE CONTESTANTS IS EVEN THINKING OF INQUIRING ABOUT HIS OPPONENT'S HEALTH!!!
ズ!!!
ミシッ!!
ガ!!!
ガ!!!

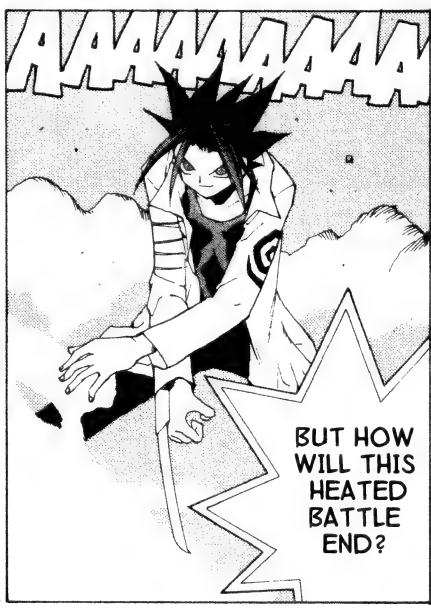
W...WOW...
TH-
THAT—!!




DOOOOOOOOOM!!

I DON'T THINK SO!! THE KATANA'S REPUTATION STEMS FROM NOTHING BUT ARISTOCRATIC PROPAGANDA!! CRYING WINE AND SELLING VINEGAR, IF YOU ASK ME!!
ナル!!
AMAZING!! THAT SWORDPLAY HAS THE EXCELLENCE OF ONE HUNDRED SOLDIERS BEHIND IT! SURELY, OUR FRIEND FROM THE LAND OF THE RISING SUN IS DISPLAYING THE STRENGTH THAT EARNED HIM HIS NAME! DO WE HAVE A MATCH?!!

OOOOOOOOOOO
NOTHING TO DO BUT WATCH AND LEARN!!


AAAAAAAAAAA
BUT HOW WILL THIS HEATED BATTLE END?

Talk about stamina...
EVEN AS NIGHTFALL APPROACHES, THE BATTLE IS REACHING A FEVER PITCH.
TRULY, THIS IS ONE TREMENDOUS BOUT!
GAN!
SHA!
SHA!
VAT!!
GAN!

I WOULD EXPECT NOT. I HAVEN'T SEEN SUCH SPLENDID FIGHTING SINCE THE TOURNAMENTS WERE FIRST HELD.
So graceful...
NO ONE IN THE ENTIRE AUDIENCE APPEARS TO HAVE ANY INTENTION OF LEAVING, DESPITE BEING HELD CAPTIVE BY THIS MATCH FOR NEARLY FIVE HOURS!
THEIR BODIES STRAINING TO AVOID EACH OTHER...
DRAWING ASIDE IN THE NICK OF TIME AS DEATH NARROWLY MISSES AGAIN...

...ALMOST LIKE DANCERS AT A BALL.

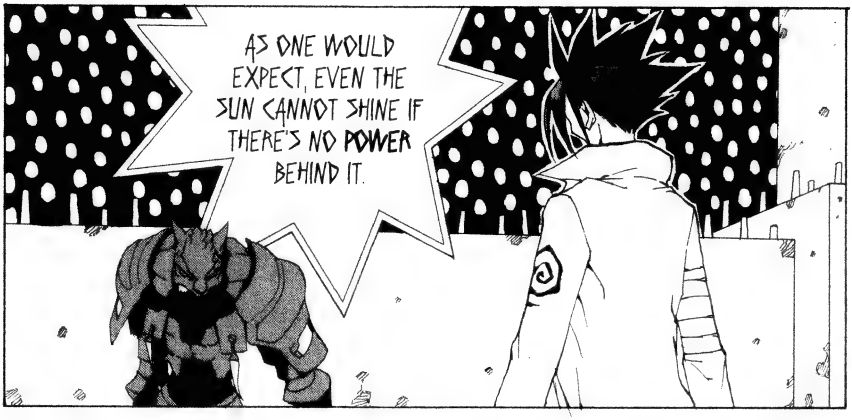
HMMM!!!

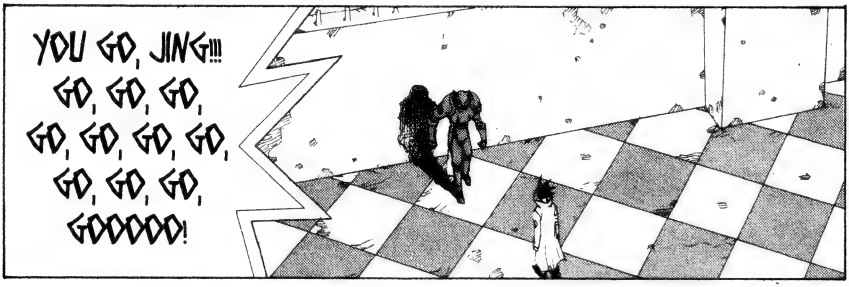
AAHHHH!!!

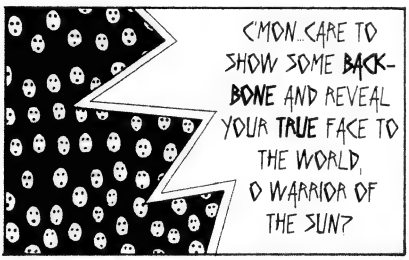
?!

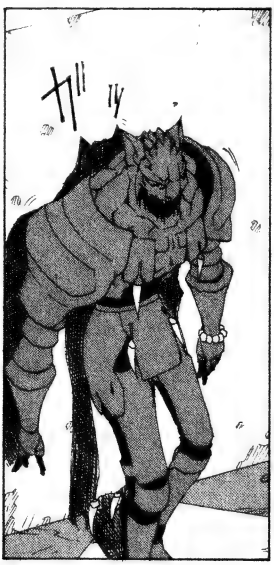
WHAT THE?!

AND--
IT'S OVER!
SURE AS THE SUN RISES, THE SUN ALSO SETS...AS WE--ER, JING--ISSUES A STUNNING CHECKMATE.
KYAAAAARRGGGHH!!!
CASHA

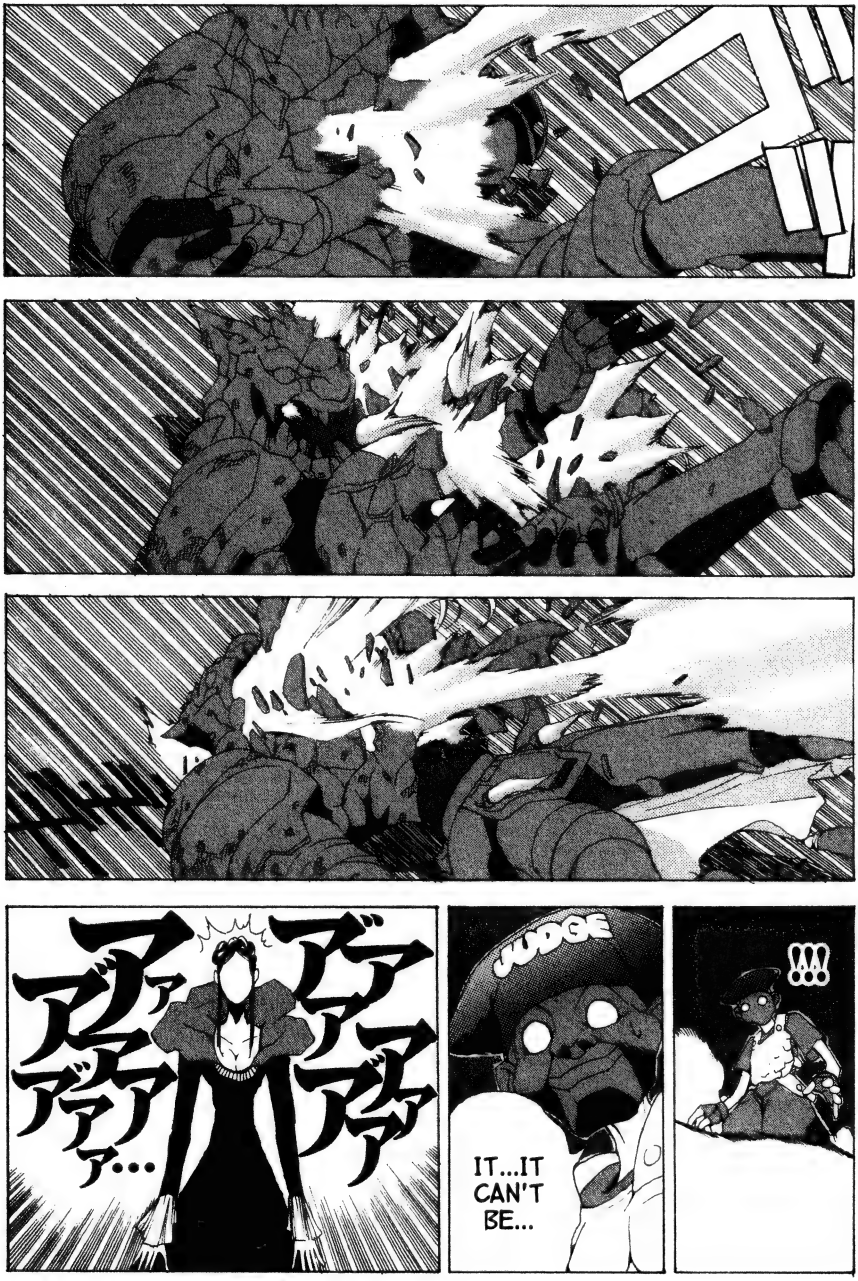

AS ONE WOULD EXPECT, EVEN THE SUN CANNOT SHINE IF THERE'S NO POWER BEHIND IT.

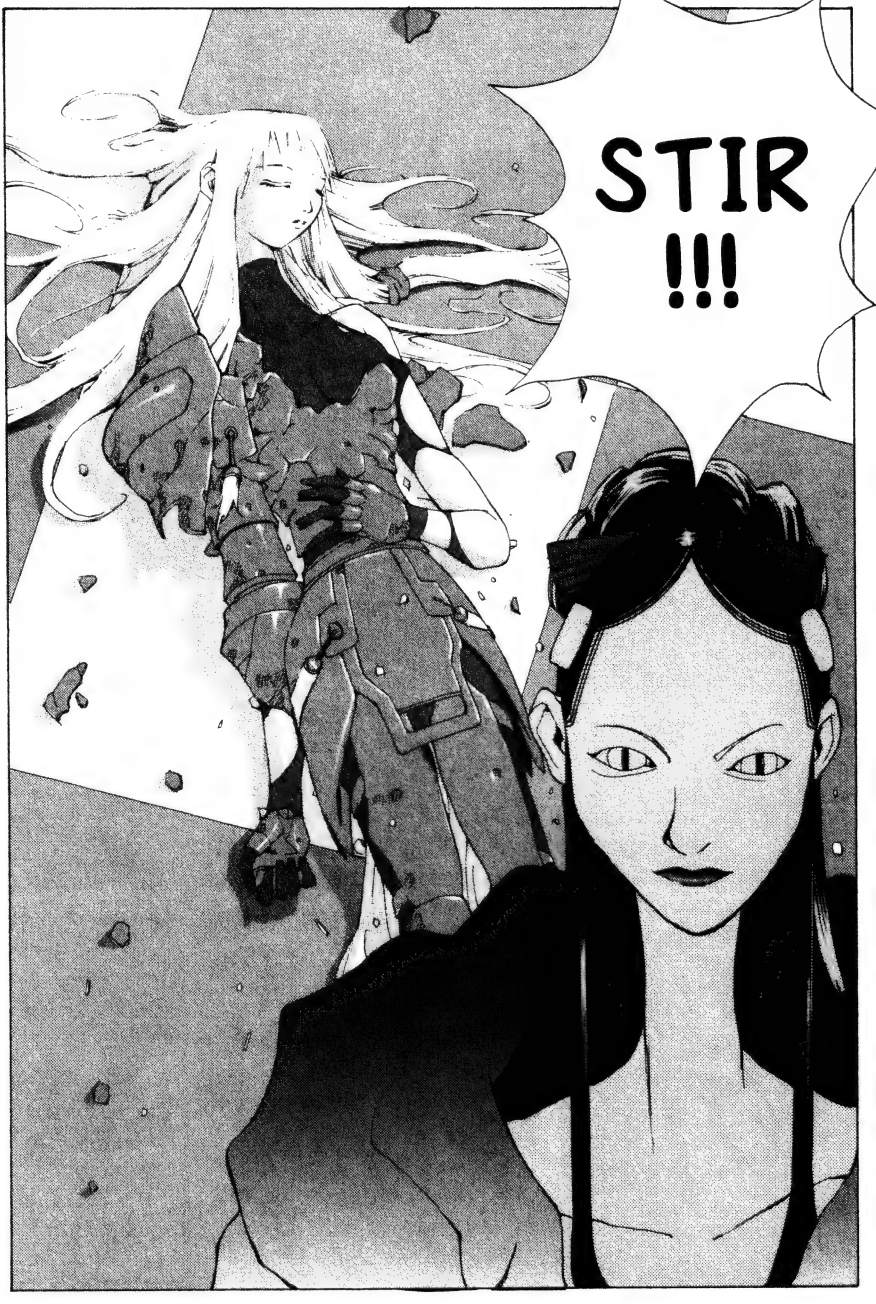

YOU GO, JING!!! GO, GO, GO, GO, GO, GO, GO, GO, GO, GO, GO, GOOOOO!

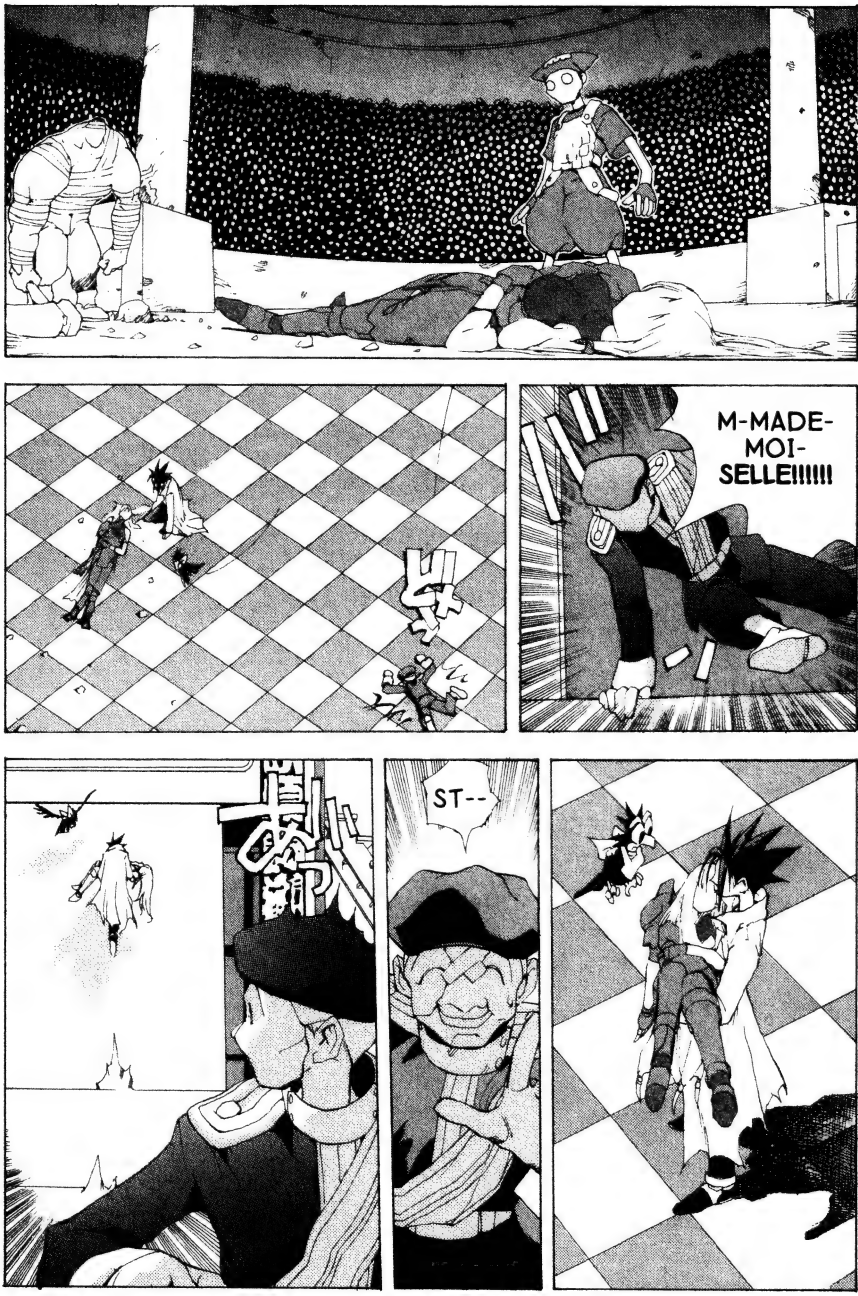

C'MON...CARE TO SHOW SOME BACK-BONE AND REVEAL YOUR TRUE FACE TO THE WORLD, O WARRIOR OF THE SUN?



CRACK!
CUBE ?!!
!


!!!
JUDGE
IT...IT CAN'T BE...
アアアアアアアアアア...


STIR
!!!


M-MADE-
MOI-
SELLE!!!!!!
ST--

STOP HIM!!!
!!?

LOOKS LIKE YOU CAN'T HIDE EVERYTHING BEHIND A MASK!!

MA... DAME... MOI- SELLE...

WH-WHAT TO SAY?!! IN A CASE LIKE THIS...I MEAN, THE WARRIOR FROM THE SUN IS OUR VERY OWN, MADEMOISELLE. MY GOD...

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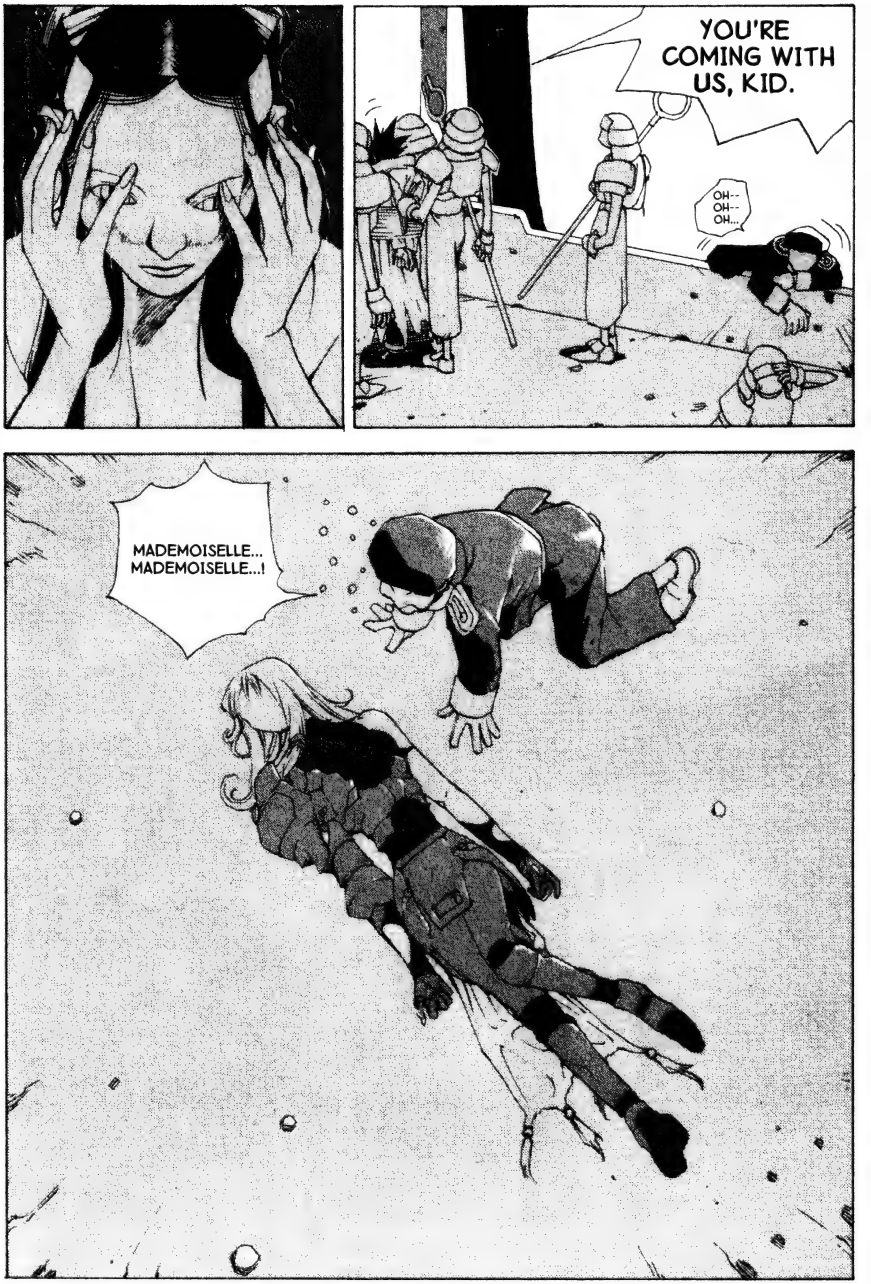
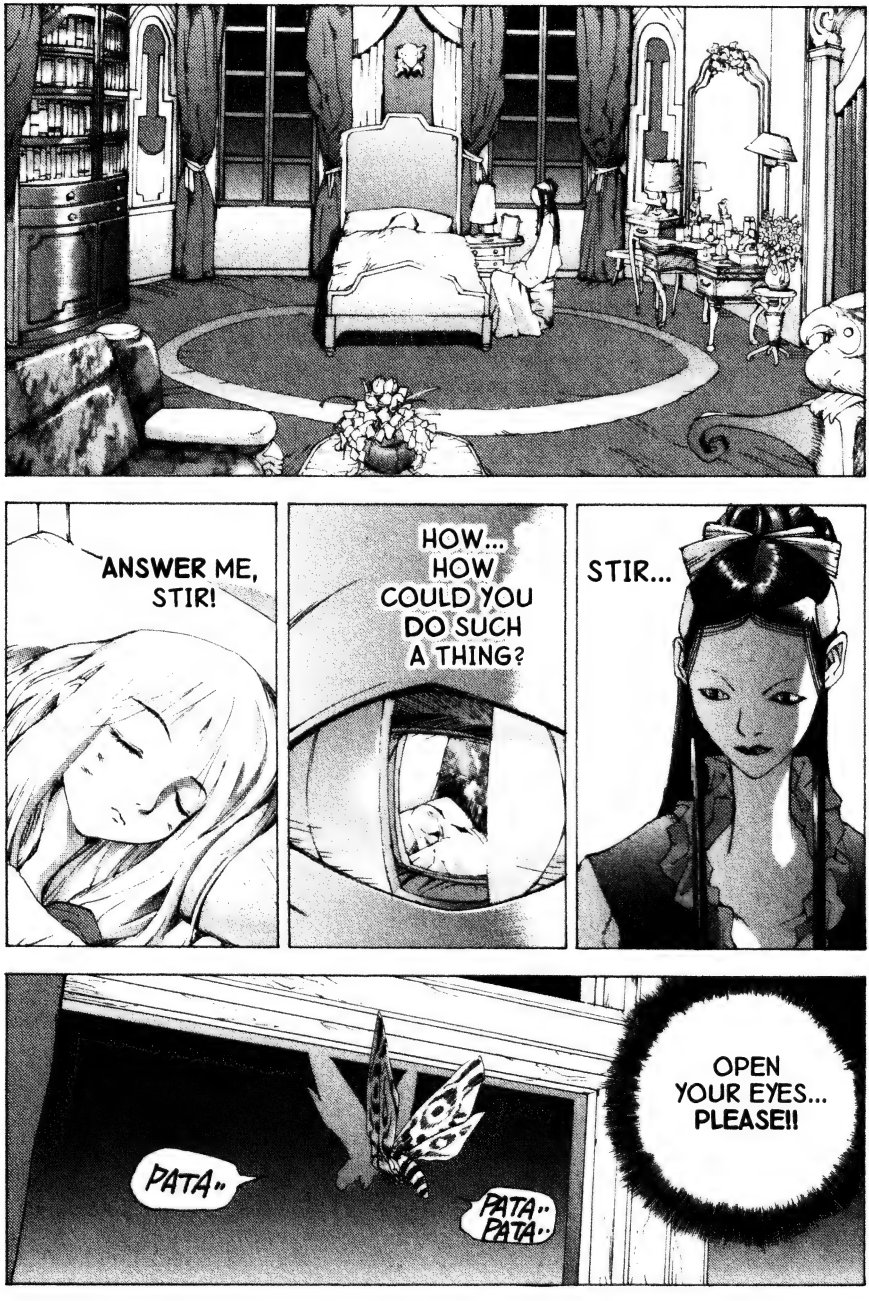
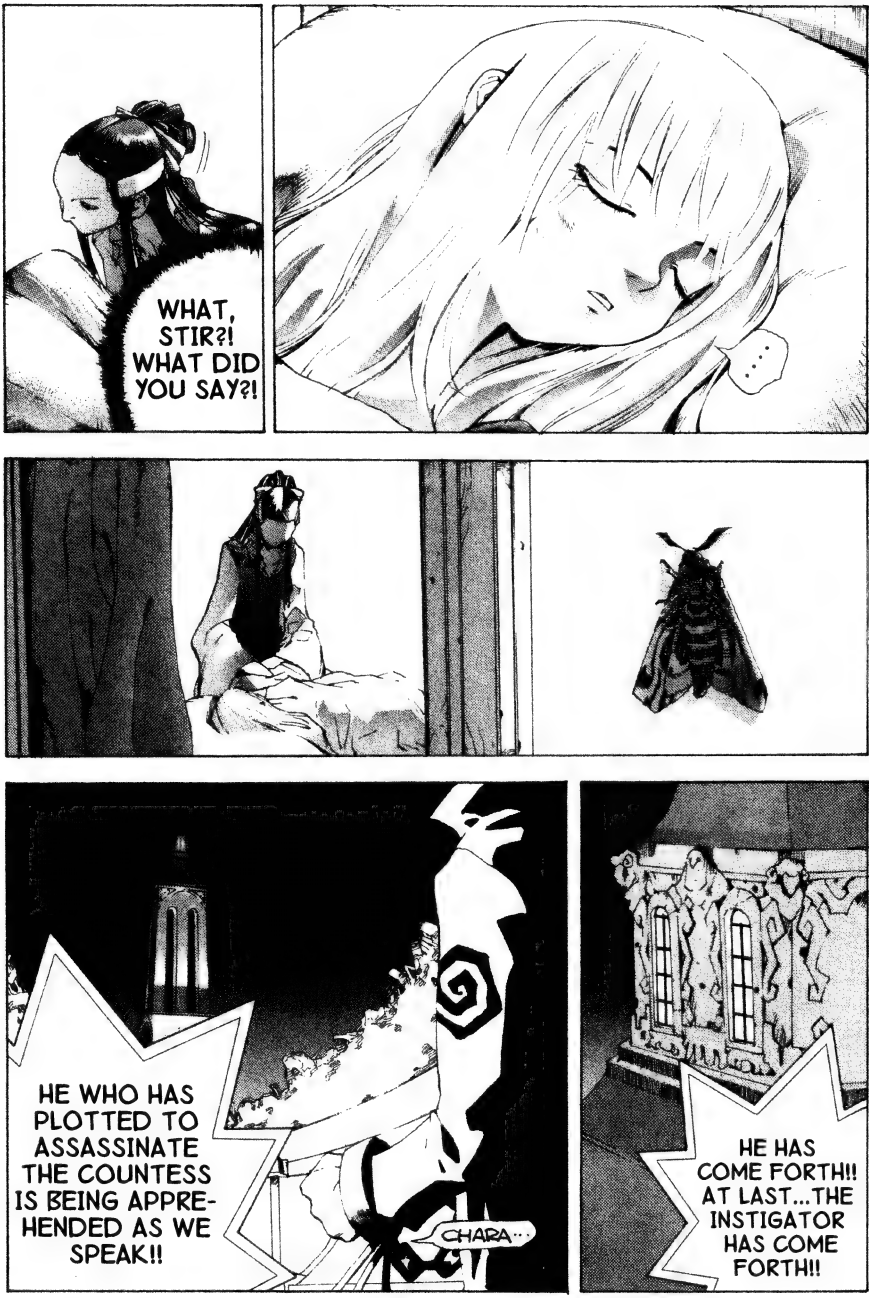

YOU'RE COMING WITH US, KID.
OH-- OH-- OH...
MADEMOISELLE... MADEMOISELLE...!

23rd SHOT - TEARS FROM AN UNMASKED FACE


ANSWER ME, STIR!
HOW... HOW COULD YOU DO SUCH A THING?
STIR...
PATA..
PATA.. PATA..
OPEN YOUR EYES... PLEASE!!


WHAT, STIR?! WHAT DID YOU SAY?!
HE WHO HAS PLOTTED TO ASSASSINATE THE COUNTESS IS BEING APPREHENDED AS WE SPEAK!!
CHARA...
HE HAS COME FORTH!! AT LAST...THE INSTIGATOR HAS COME FORTH!!

BOO!

BOO!

BOO!

BOO!

THIS CRIME, AIMED AT THE VERY LIFE OF OUR COUNTESS, SURELY WARRANTS CAPITAL PUNISHMENT-- NO MATTER HOW YOUNG HE IS!!!

ス

!!

DON'T IMITATE.

DON'T IMITATE.

DON'T IMITATE.

HEY-HEY-HEY, THE MASK STAYS ...

THE MASK STAYS ON.

THE MASK STAYS ON.

D-DON'T IMITATE ME!!

HEY!! THE MASK STAYS ON!!

AT LEAST I BELIEVE IN YA, JING...EVEN IF NO ONE ELSE DOES!

Plus, I brought you a gift.

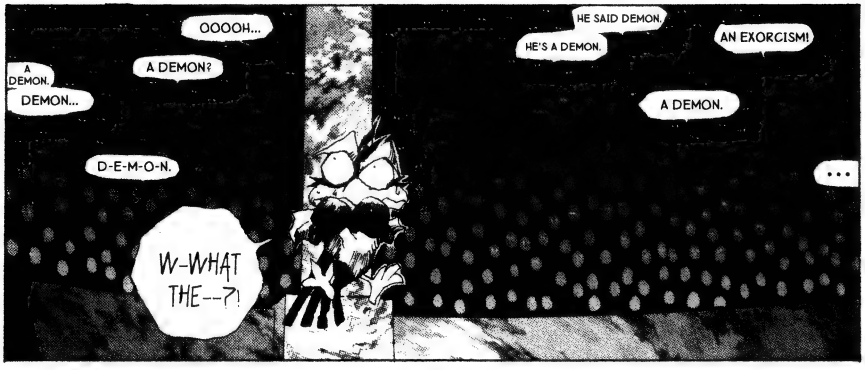
SO... ANGOSTURA'S SON. WHAT DO YOU THINK YOUR OLD MAN WOULD SAY IF HE COULD SEE YOU NOW? I IMAGINE IT'D BE TOO MUCH TO BEAR.
ALLOWING THIS WHELP TO LAY HIS HANDS ON THE COUNTESS LIKE THAT...NOT TO MENTION MY YOUNGER BROTHER!!!
!?

FOR THAT ALONE YOU DESERVE TO DIE!!!
BAFFLE!! STOP THAT AT ONCE--!!
I SAID, STOP IT!
FOO!! WEAVING A CAT'S CRADLE, ARE WE, BOY? RISKING YOUR LIFE ON A GAME?

...COMES WITH A COMPLETE SET!!
WELL, UNFORTU-NATELY FOR YOU...
...MY SPECIAL COOKING TOOL...
BAFFLE-- WHAT ARE YOU PLANNING?!! YOU KNOW THAT LYNCHING IS EXPRESSLY FORBIDDEN BY OUR LAW!!

THIS IS LAW!! THIS IS LAW ITSELF!!
LAW?!! LAW, YOU SAY?
VUO/
EVEN IF YOU'RE SO BADLY HURT THAT YOUR BLOOD DRIES UPON THE FLOOR...
EVEN IF YOU ARE TIRED TO THE POINT WHERE YOUR EYES WON'T OPEN...
...FEAR WILL ALWAYS STIMULATE THE BODY INTO ACTION!!

AND I ASK YOU...SHOULD THE LAWS OF THE HUMAN WORLD APPLY TO HIM?
THAT IS THE ONLY LAW WITHIN THE TEMPEST WE CALL BATTLE!!!
THIS CHILD IS NOTHING BUT AN EVIL BEAST--A DEMON WHO HAS BROUGHT ONLY MISFORTUNE TO OUR BELOVED ZAZA!!!
AND I SHALL PERFORM ...
...THE EXORCISM!!


OOOOH...
A DEMON?
A DEMON.
DEMON...
D-E-M-O-N.
W-WHAT THE--?!
HE SAID DEMON.
HE'S A DEMON.
AN EXORCISM!
A DEMON.
...

AND MADEMOISELLE STIR... HE MAY HAVE HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH THAT! DO YOU THINK SHE WOULD HAVE GOTTEN HURT IF HE HADN'T COME TO TOWN?

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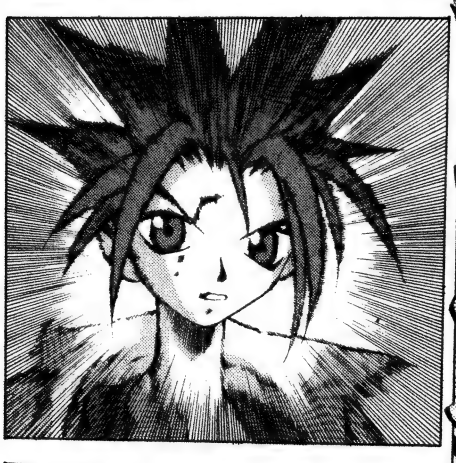
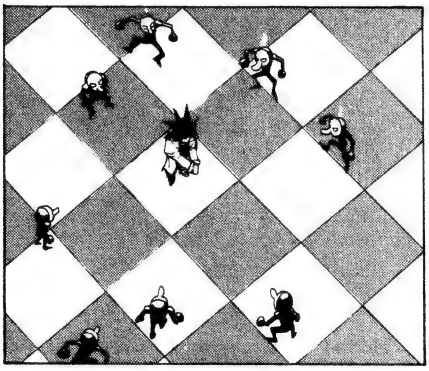
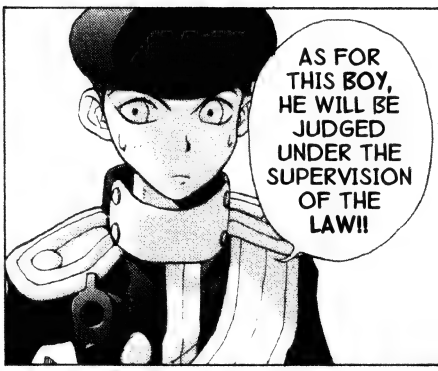


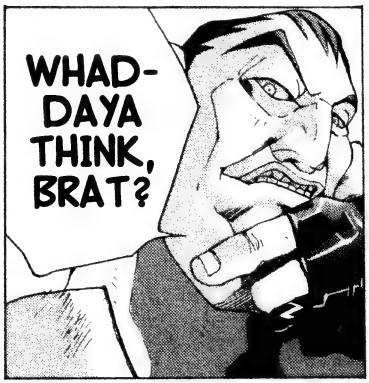
IF WE DON'T EXECUTE HIM NOW, BEFORE HE CAUSES ANOTHER MISFORTUNE--!!

BANG!

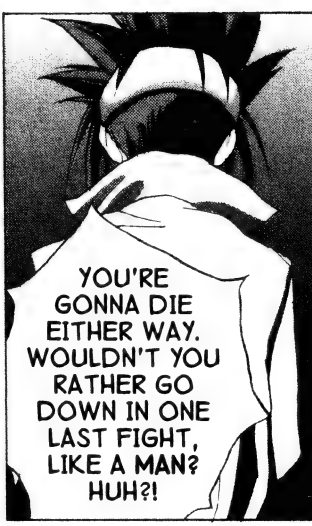
Y-YOU DON'T HAVE FREE REIN HERE, BAFFLE! IF... IF YOU ATTEMPT TO ENFORCE A PUBLIC EXECUTION WITHOUT THE LAW'S APPROVAL...
...I-I'LL HAVE TO ARRANGE... CONFISCATION... OF YOUR MASK... FROM YOUR HEAD!!




AS FOR THIS BOY, HE WILL BE JUDGED UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF THE LAW!!

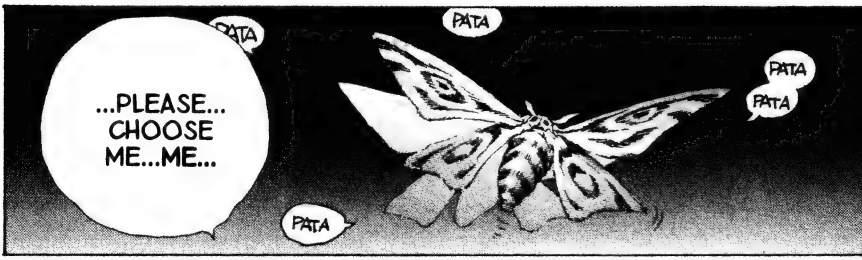

WHAD-DAYA THINK, BRAT?

ANSWER ME, BRAT!!

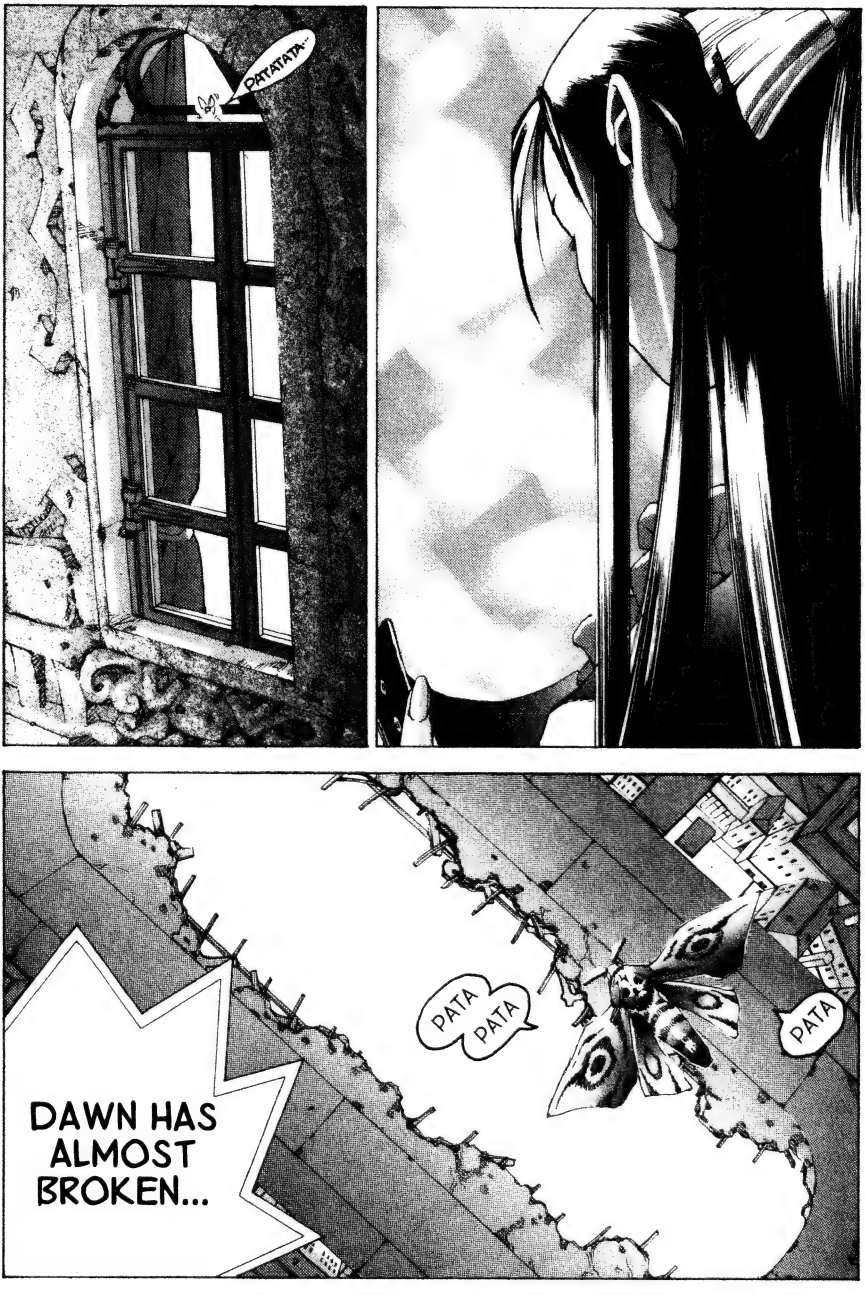

YOU'RE GONNA DIE EITHER WAY. WOULDN'T YOU RATHER GO DOWN IN ONE LAST FIGHT, LIKE A MAN? HUH?!

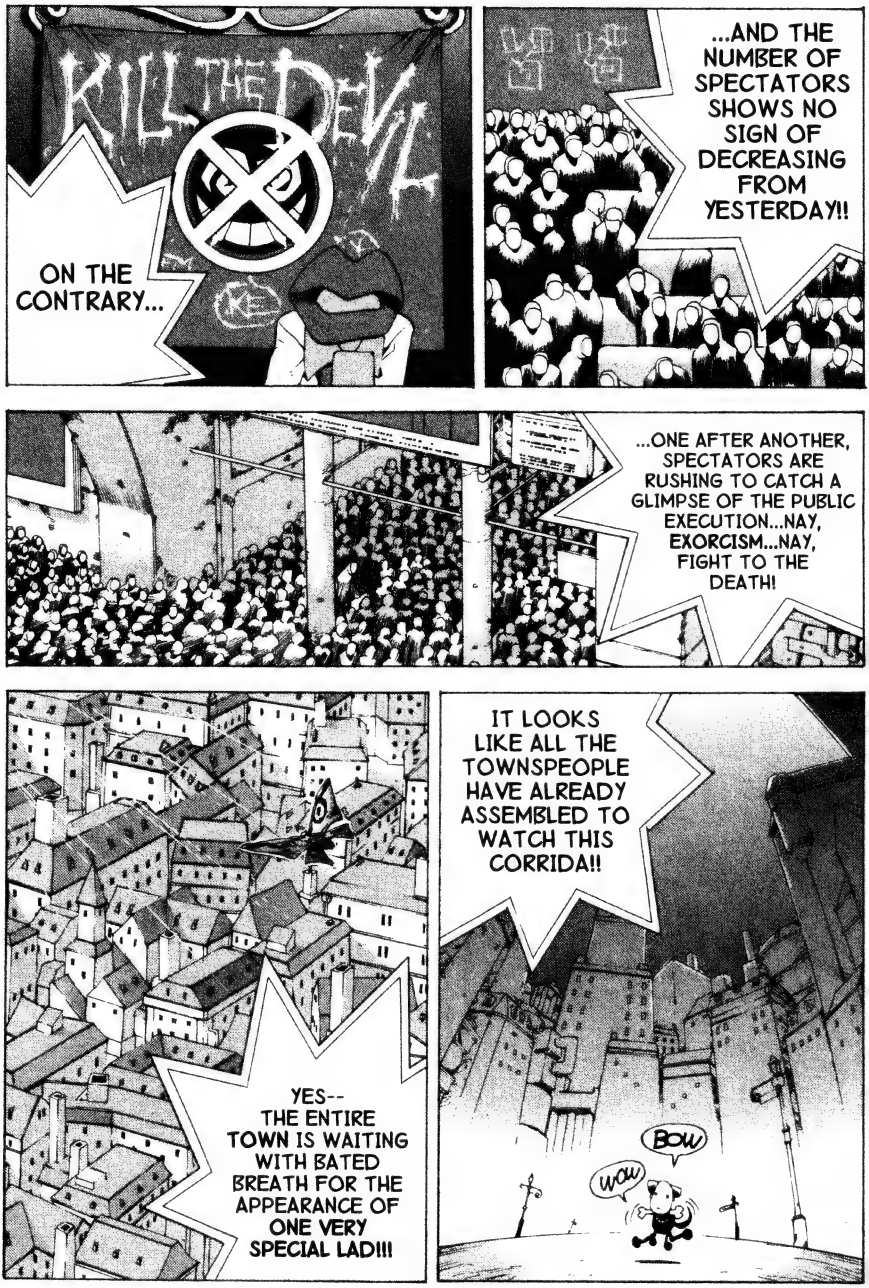
MA...
MAMA...
...I...CAN'T
RE...RE...
REPLACE
LE...MON,
BUT...
B...
BECAUSE
I TRIED MY
BEST...
...BECAUSE
I...TRIED
MY BEST...
IN HIS
HONOR...

...IF I'M VICTORIOUS... I BEG YOU...


...PLEASE... CHOOSE ME...ME...
PATA
PATA
PATA
PATA
PATA

...PLEASE... MAMA...


PATATATA
PATA
PATA
PATA
DAWN HAS ALMOST BROKEN...

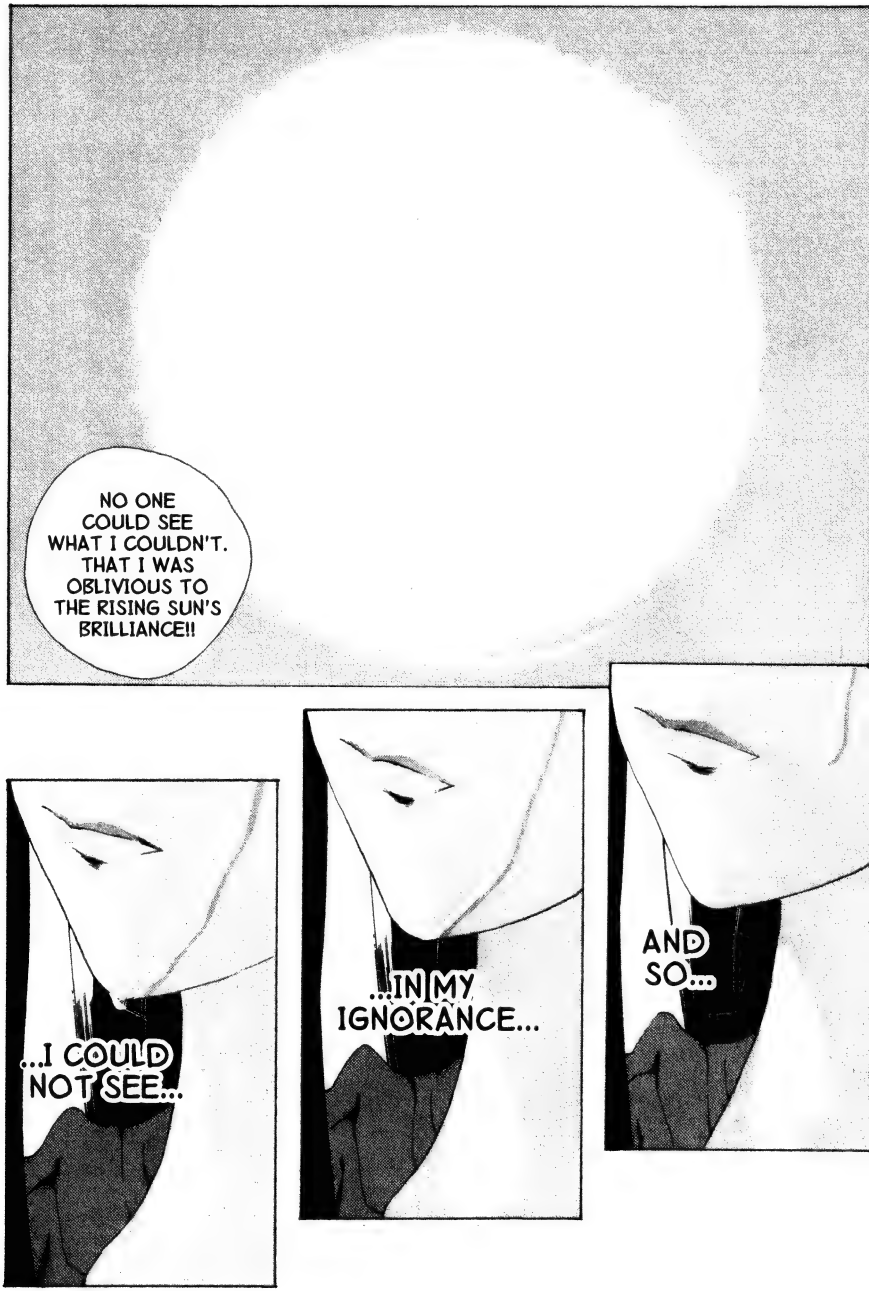

KILL THE DEVIL
ON THE CONTRARY...
...AND THE NUMBER OF SPECTATORS SHOWS NO SIGN OF DECREASING FROM YESTERDAY!!
...ONE AFTER ANOTHER, SPECTATORS ARE RUSHING TO CATCH A GLIMPSE OF THE PUBLIC EXECUTION...NAY, EXORCISM...NAY, FIGHT TO THE DEATH!
YES-- THE ENTIRE TOWN IS WAITING WITH BATED BREATH FOR THE APPEARANCE OF ONE VERY SPECIAL LAD!!!
IT LOOKS LIKE ALL THE TOWNSPEOPLE HAVE ALREADY ASSEMBLED TO WATCH THIS CORRIDA!!
BOW
WOW

HEY!! HOW'S ABOUT THAT EXOR-CISM?!!
AND THE EXECUTION?! ARE YOU STILL GONNA DO THE EXECUTION?!
KILL HIM!! KILL HIM NOW!!
ALL RIGHT... TAKE IT EASY.
THE COOKING PROCESS WILL TAKE SEVERAL SECONDS, PERHAPS...
...BUT IF POSSIBLE, I WANT THE LADIES AND GENTLEMEN OF THE CROWD TO RELISH...

WHOOSH
...THE LASTING, BITTER TASTE OF IMPARTIAL LAW!!!
HMM... SO YOU CAME.

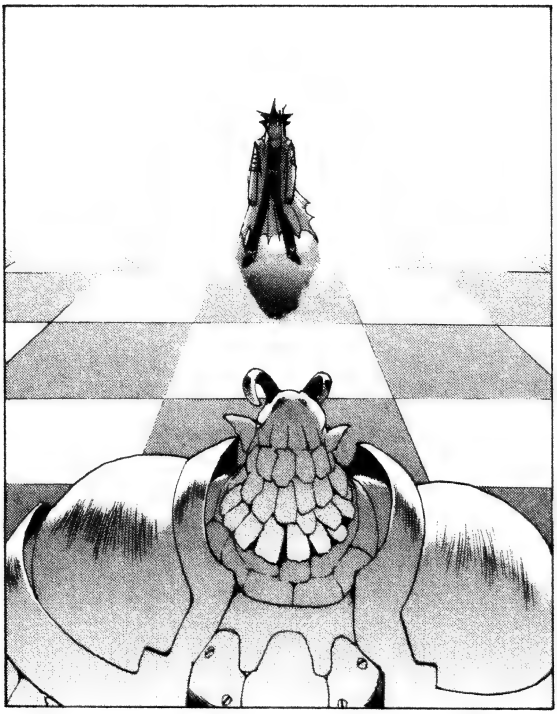
MORNING? YES, IT IS MORNING.
AFTER ALL, WHEN THIS STAR EMERGED AS A WHITE SPECK, COUNTLESS BILLIONS OF YEARS AGO...
...IT WAS NOT TOO CLOSE, NOT TOO FAR... NOT TOO HOT, NOT TOO COLD...
OUR STAR HAS RISEN ONCE MORE... AND WHAT A BLESSED STAR IT IS.

...AND SO WE WERE ABLE TO SNUGGLE UP CLOSE TO IT, AND IT CONTINUES TO GAZE DOWN UPON US.
LONG, LONG AGO, WORDS LIKE "FAVORED SON" OFTEN FLOATED AROUND THESE SQUARES.
BUT I WAS A FOOL...
...TO HOLD ONLY THE SETTING SUN DEAR.


NO ONE COULD SEE WHAT I COULDN'T. THAT I WAS OBLIVIOUS TO THE RISING SUN'S BRILLIANCE!!
...I COULD NOT SEE...
...IN MY IGNORANCE...
AND SO...

...I WAS ABOUT TO LOSE ANOTHER CHILD!!

WATER, WATER... OKAY!!
WA... WATER... BRING ME WATER...
WATER!! BRING ME WATER!!!!
And plenty of it.

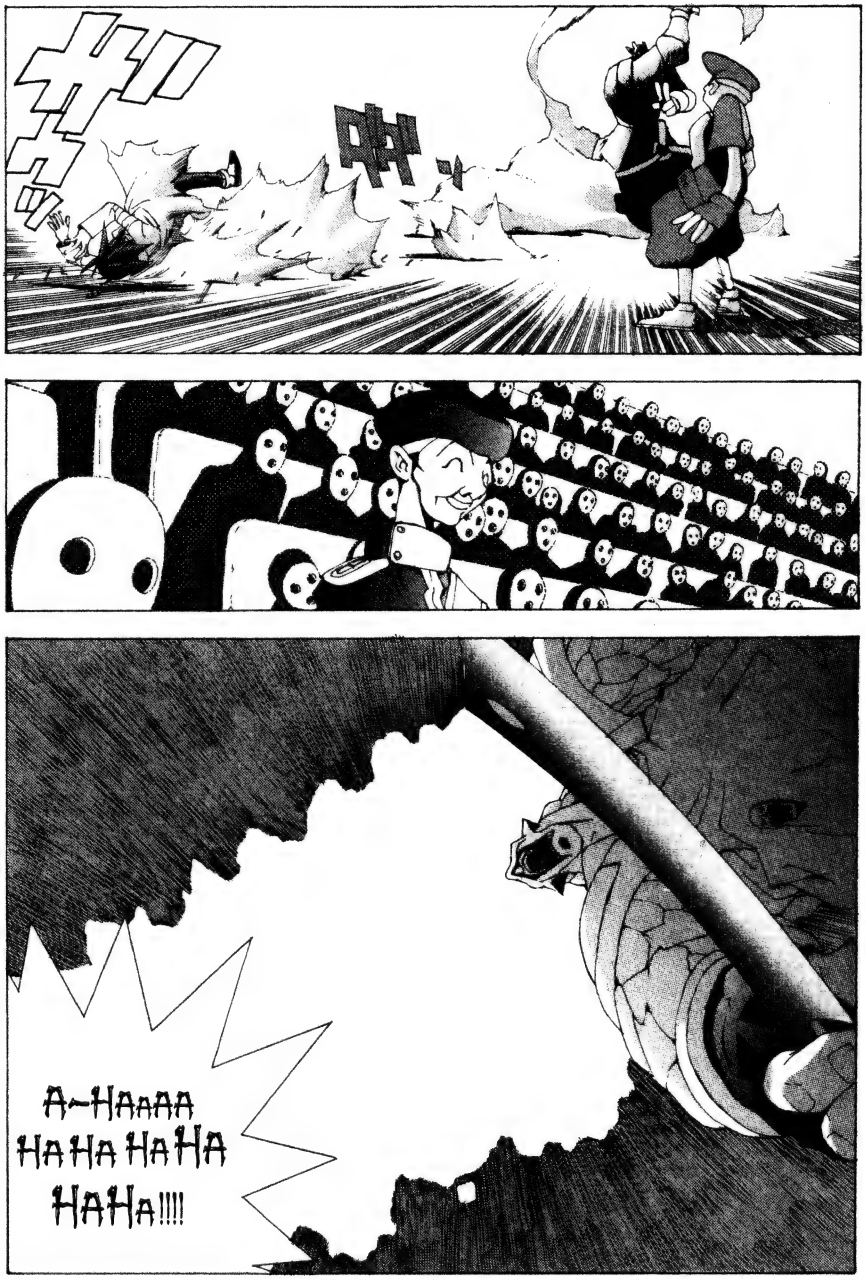


PHOOAAAW!
NOW, THEN... SHALL WE BEGIN?

N-no... I'll decide that.
NOW, JUDGE! GIVE ME MY SIGNAL NOW!!

WELL, MAKE IT QUICK!!

UWAA!
BANG
EH...AH...
A-already?
URRRAAAAAAAA
AARRGHH!!!


A~HAAAA
HAHA HAHA
HAHA!!!!

はははははは

GOOD COOKING IS AN ART, I TELL YOU--AN ART!!

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA!

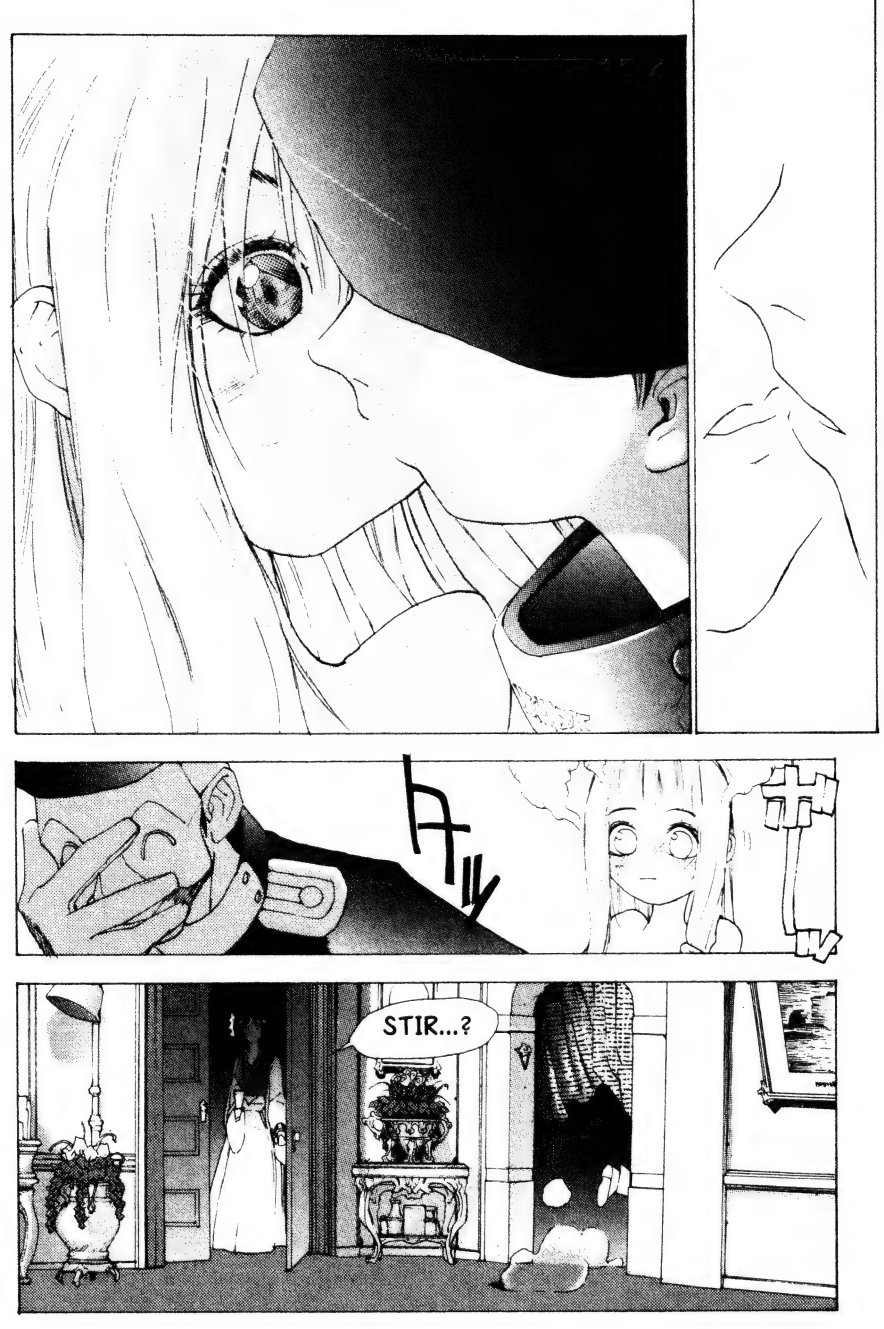
I DON'T BELIEVE IT--THE FIGHT THAT EVERYONE EXPECTED TO BE SO THRILLING HAS BEEN CUT DISAPPOINTINGLY SHORT! WHO EXPECTED THIS TO TURN INTO AN OUTRIGHT TRAGEDY?

BAK

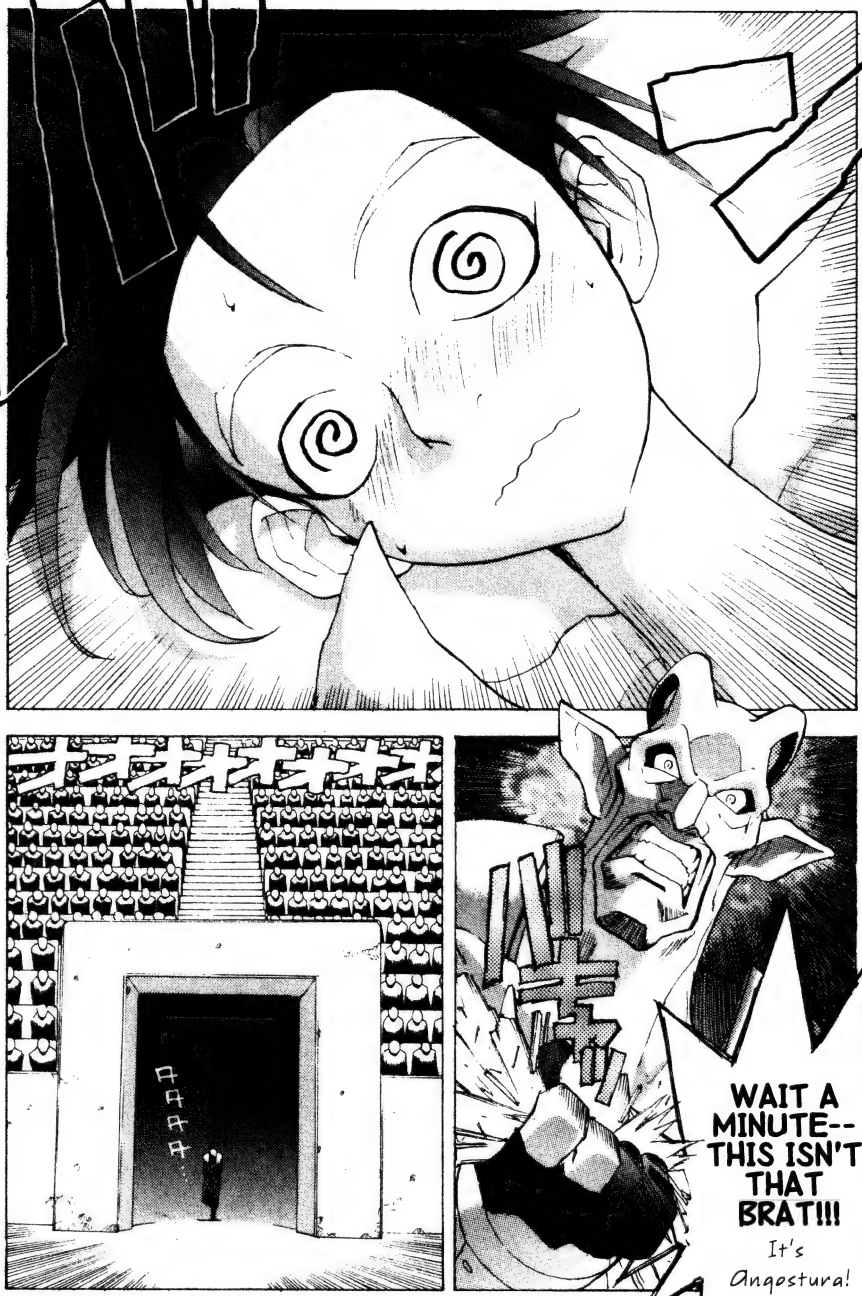
NOW, THEN... BEFORE I FINISH YOU OFF...

パチッ!!
WHERE AM I? MAMA'S ROOM?
ｶﾊｯ!!
HOW LONG... HAVE I BEEN IN HERE... LIKE THIS?
GLUNK

SHH.
WHAT'RE YOU DOING HERE, ANGOSTURA?!! IN MY MOTHER'S CHAMBERS!
POI
POI
POI
SNACK
WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?! DON'T IGNORE ME!! SAY SOMETHING!!
OH...
YOU'RE ACTING STRANGE, ANGOSTURA. W-W-WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!!!


STIR...?

MA... MAMA ...
YOU'RE SAFE NOW--DO YOU UNDER-STAND? MOTHER'S HERE. WHERE ARE YOU HURT? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?! TELL ME.
STIR, WHAT'S THE MATTER?!!!
BAH!! AFTER I TEAR OFF YOUR MASK...
...I'LL PEEL OFF YOUR SKIN AND STUFF YOU LIKE THE TROPHY YOU ARE!!

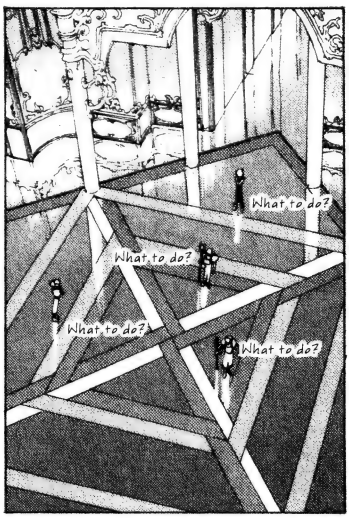

WAIT A MINUTE-- THIS ISN'T THAT BRAT!!!
It's Angostura!

THAT CUR!! THE KING OF BANDITS!!!
I CAN'T BELIEVE I FELL RIGHT INTO HIS TRAP--THAT CHILD WAS THE KING OF BANDITS!!
KING... KING OF BANDITS ?!!
HURRY, YOU IDIOTS!! THE VINTAGE SMILE'S IN DANGER!!
THANKS TO THAT ABSURD DUEL, THE FAMILY TREASURE'S IRON-CLAD SECURITY HAS BEEN REDUCED TO SHARDS OF GLASS!!
HOW DID HE DISABLE ME SO EASILY?!

OH... MY... NOOO OOO !!!

I-I THOUGHT HE WAS YOU, MASTER ANGOSTURA.

OH!! HOW IS THE COUNTESS? AND THE MADEMOISELLE-- IS SHE SAFE?!!

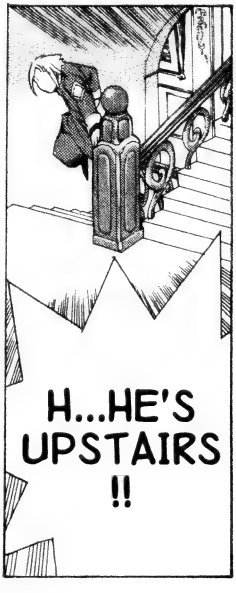

What to do?
What to do?
What to do?
What to do?

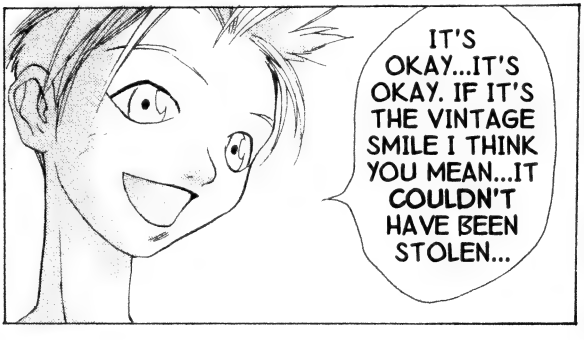
WHAT ABOUT THE FAMILY TREASURE?! IS THE VINTAGE SMILE STILL THERE?!!
ﾊﾞﾝ

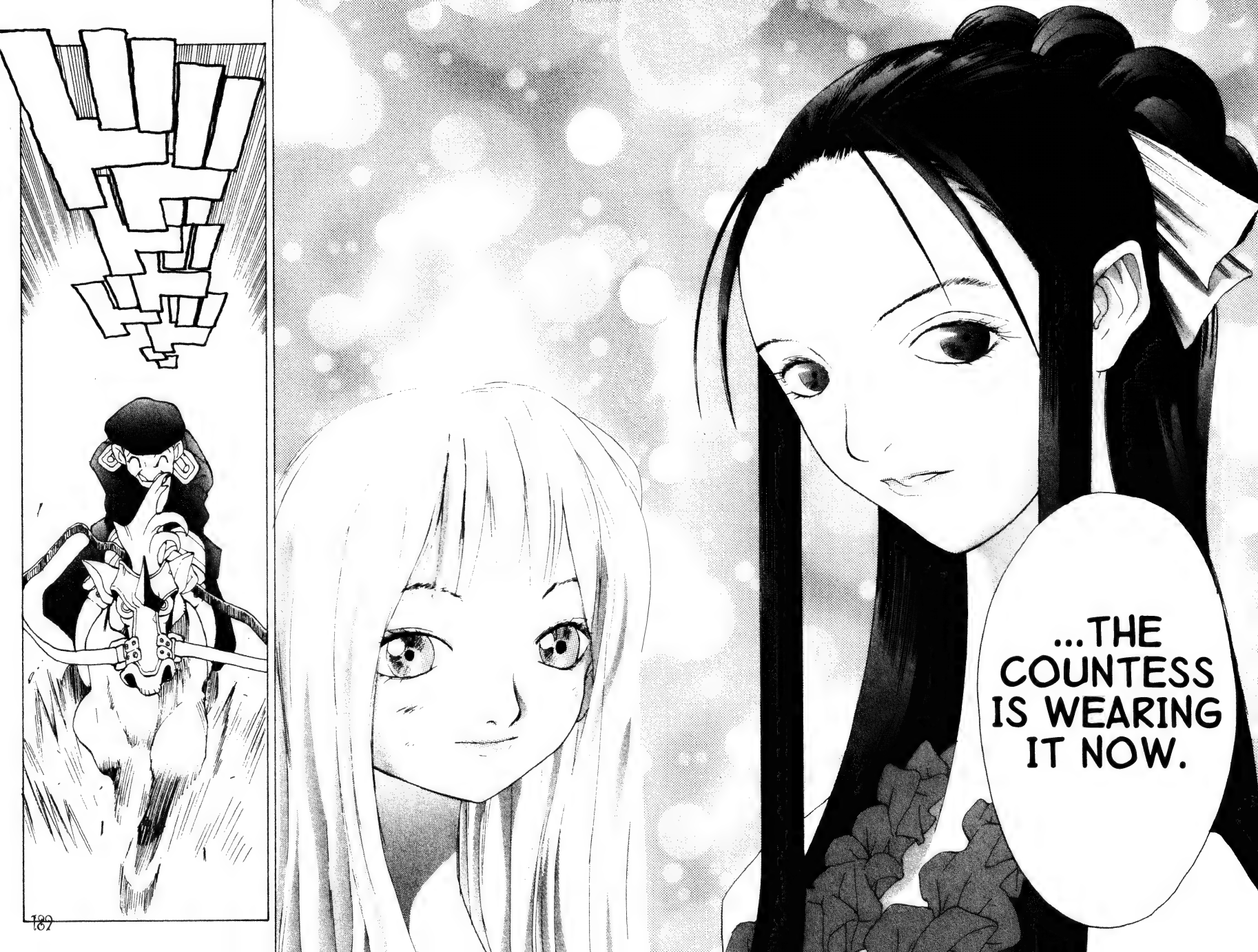
AND? WHAT ABOUT MY GRANDSON? WHERE IS ANGOSTURA ?!

IT... IT WAS JUST SNATCHED AWAY, SIR!!

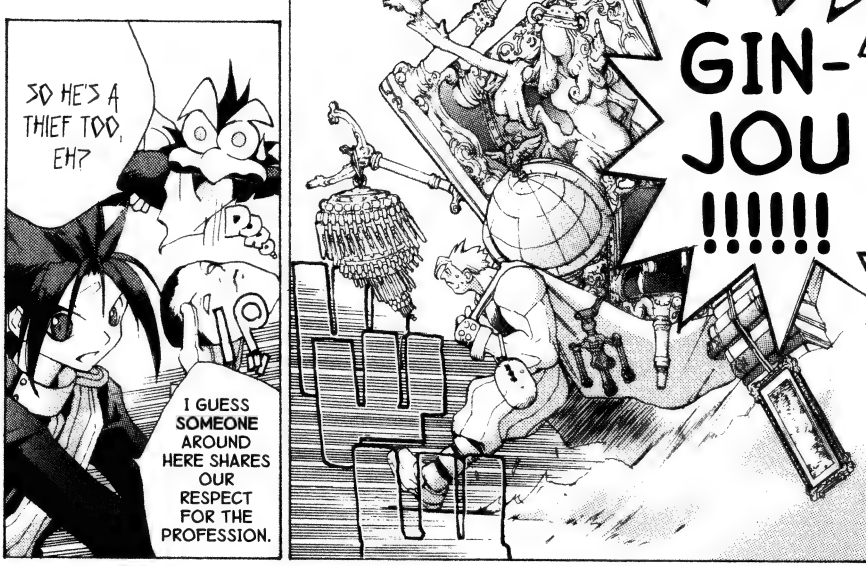
S-SO, THEN... I SUPPOSE... THE FAMILY TREASURE... IF IT'S MISSING, BOY...

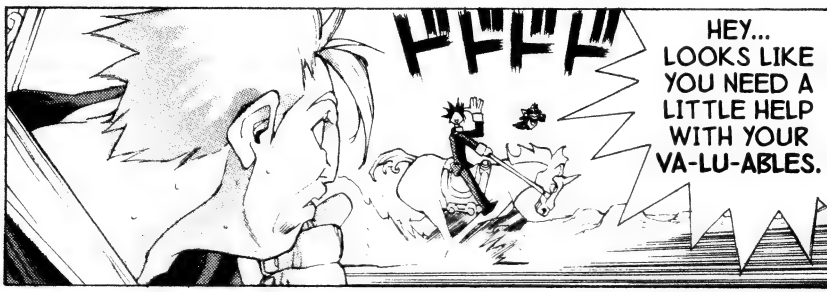

H...HE'S UPSTAIRS !!


IT'S OKAY...IT'S OKAY. IF IT'S THE VINTAGE SMILE I THINK YOU MEAN...IT COULDN'T HAVE BEEN STOLEN...


...THE COUNTESS IS WEARING IT NOW.

BIN GO!!
HOW SHALL I PUT THIS? I GUESS YOU COULD SAY IT WENT RATHER SMOOTHLY.
SO..WHAT HAPPENED WHEN MADEMOISELLE STIR NOTICED YOU?
THAT GUY AGAIN !!
WHAT?! YOU OF ALL PEOPLE, KEEPING THIS KIND OF THING FROM ME?!!
I'm over here! Stop looking into my eyes!
OH-- HUH?!!

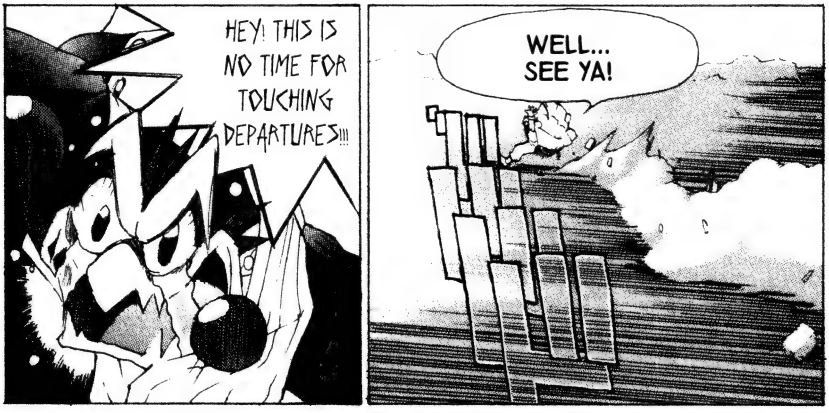

SO HE'S A THIEF TOO, EH?
I GUESS SOMEONE AROUND HERE SHARES OUR RESPECT FOR THE PROFESSION.
GIN-JOU !!!!!!


DDDD
HEY... LOOKS LIKE YOU NEED A LITTLE HELP WITH YOUR VA-LU-ABLES.

HUH?!!

THANKS, SQUIRT! GOOD TO SEE YOU GUYS ARE STILL ALIVE-- FOR NOW!!

HAH—
YA!
BAFFLE
?!


HEY! THIS IS NO TIME FOR TOUCHING DEPARTURES!!!
WELL... SEE YA!

THAT'S IT!! THAT'S THE SMELL...
Uoooo oooH...
Oh, dear.
...A BURNING SMELL... I'D FORGOTTEN IT FOR SO MANY YEARS...
PURU..
PURU..
W-W-W-W— WHAT?!

CHOOSING THE THORNY PATH, EH, KIDDO?
...
YOU SEE, YOU'RE TAKING THE PATH OF LEAST RESIST-ANCE--TO THE AFTERLIFE!
I'M JUST GONNA WARN YOU ONCE...IT'S NOT THE BRAMBLES YOU SHOULD FEAR.

AS I'VE TOLD COUNTLESS KNAVES BEFORE YOU...
...YOU'RE ON A DIRECT COURSE FOR THE NEXT WORLD!
J-JING— LOOK! HIS FACE!!
HOW DO I KNOW? HOW CAN I BE SO CERTAIN OF YOUR FATES?!
BECAUSE I ALMOST WENT DOWN THAT ROAD MYSELF. SOMEHOW I CAME AWAY WITH MY LIFE...

J-J-
JINGGG!!
H_HIS FACE
W-W-WAS
RIPPED AWAY!!
...BUT I
PAID A
HUGE
PRICE
FOR IT!!!

SO
THAT'S HIS
REAL FACE--
HE'S BEEN
WEARING THE
MASK OF A
HUMAN ALL
THIS TIME!!

GUH AAAA AAH!
UH-OH! HE IS FOR REAL, ISN'T HE?
All right-ee then!
KIIIIR--

--ROYALE!!
GHOOOOOM
UH.. SURE. WELL, WE'RE OFF! SEE YOU IN..OH, SEVENTY YEARS!
Or whenever your life expectancy is up.
KIR
I SURE LOVE THE SMELL OF BURNING FLESH, DON'T YOU?
HHHHHH
HHHH

YOU KNOW, CHEF BAFFLE-- IT IS THE HARVEST SEASON!!
SNOORT!!
AND IT SEEMS AUTUMN'S COMING EVEN TO THIS DESOLATE FIELD...WITH A LARGE, ABUNDANT CROP!!
SEE?
GRRRRRR RRRR!!!
LOOK... LARGE FRUIT, COMING THIS WAY...
...OVER MY HEAD...

FLESH

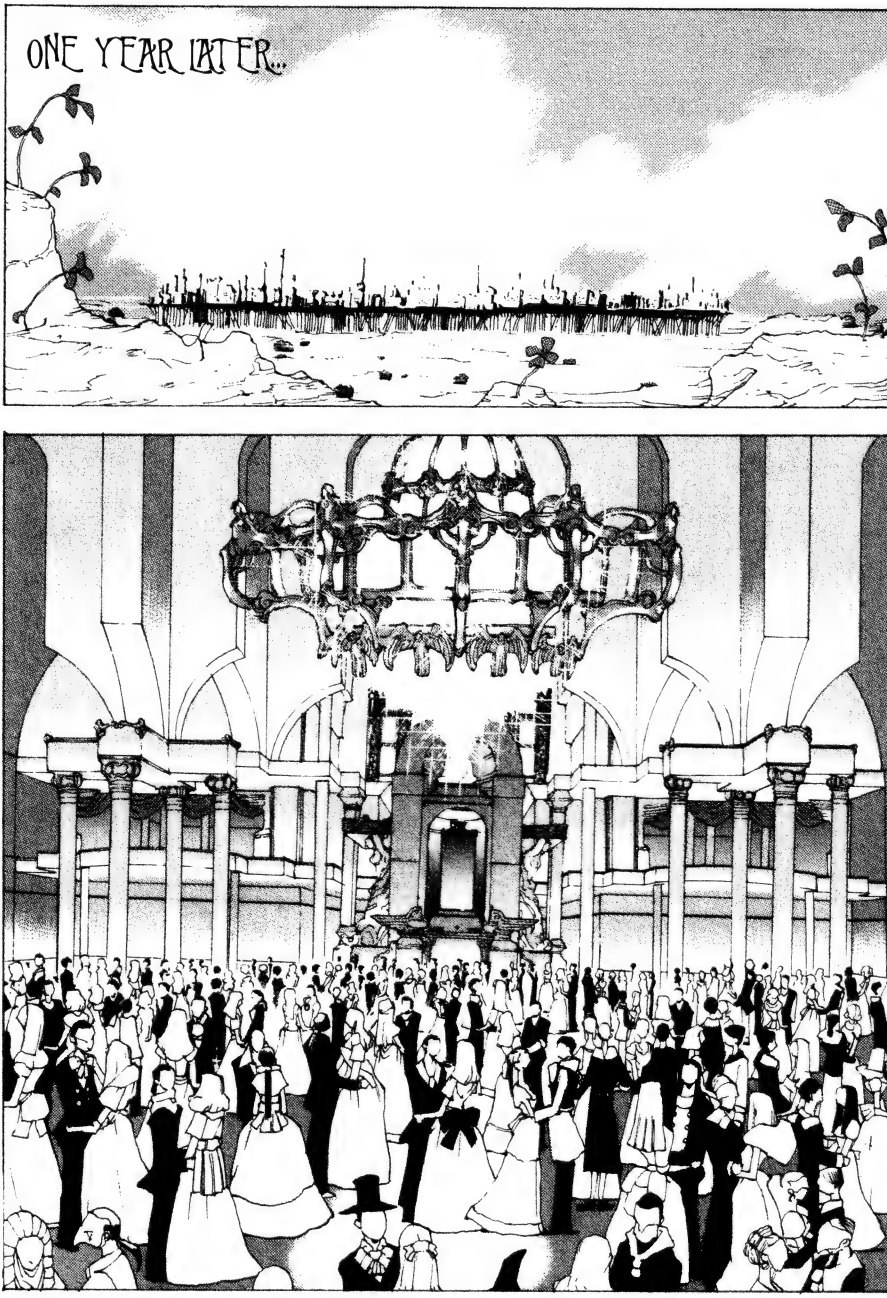
...AND ONTO YOURS!

YOU IDIOT !!!

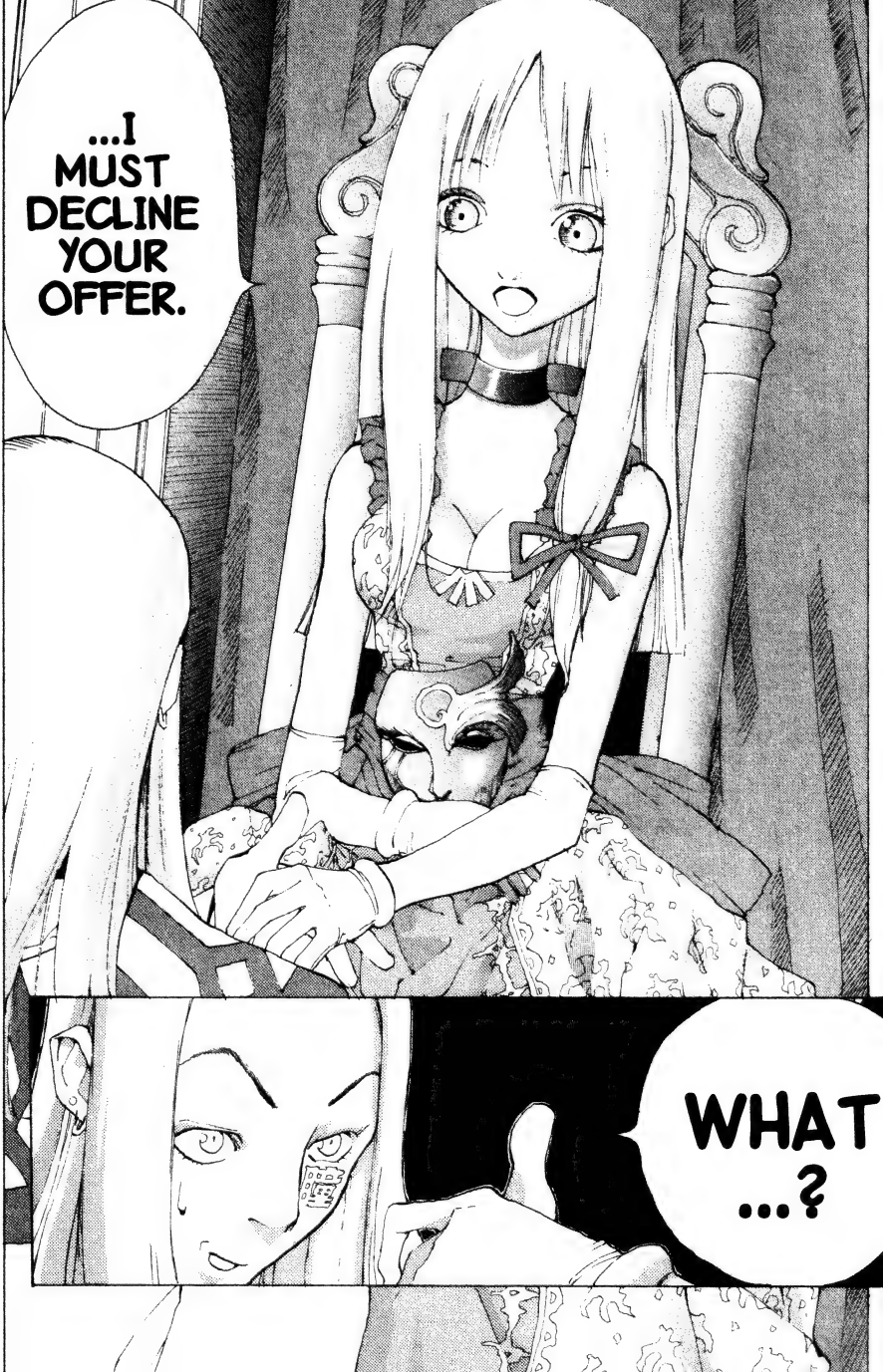
I humbly borrow the face as promised...
many thanks.
--The King of Bandits

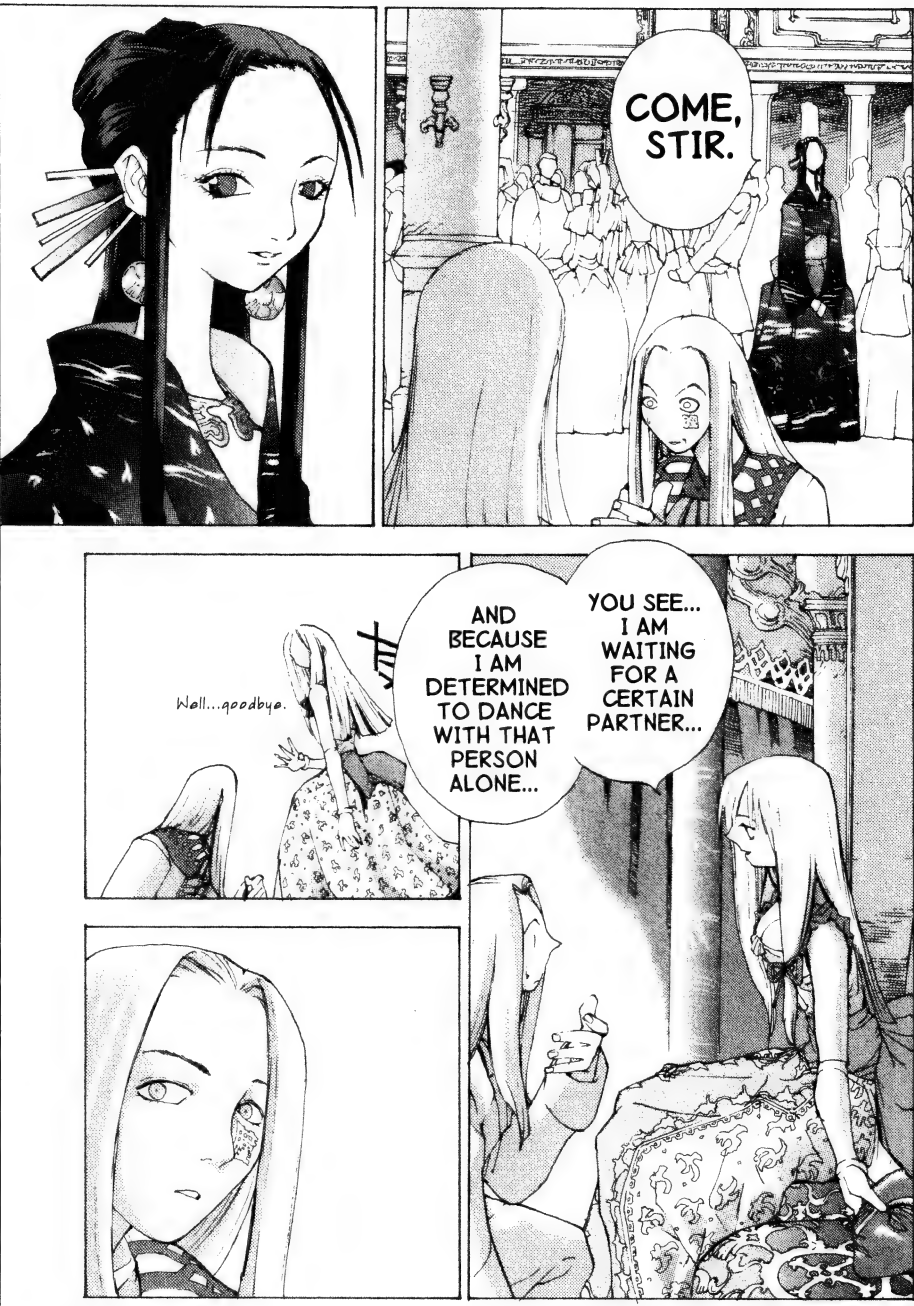
YOU BIG, STUPID IMBECILE!! THAT IS THE COUNTESS' TRUE FACE!!!
KNOCK
*bow
IF THE VINTAGE SMILE IS LOST...WELL, COME, YOU FOOL! HURRY, HURRY! WE NEED TO PUT OUT A SEARCH AND ARREST...
THAT TYKE MADE YOU A CRIME ACCESSORY WITH NO EFFORT AT ALL, DIDN'T HE?!
I HAVE NO USE FOR THAT MASK ANY LONGER.
HUH?
HALT, SOLDIER.

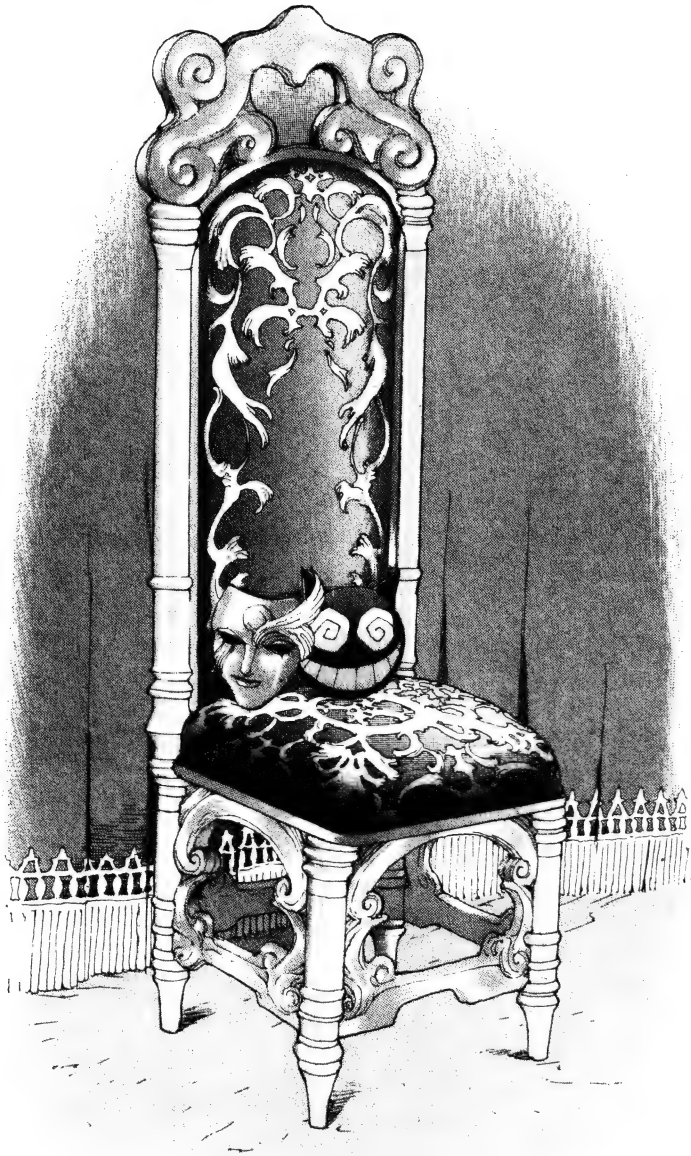
IT'S ALL RIGHT NOW.
EVERY-THING... IS ALL RIGHT.


ONE YEAR LATER...

MASQUERADE
YOU SEEM LISTLESS, MY LOVE... SITTING ALONE IN A PLACE LIKE THIS.
MADEMOISELLE... MADEMOISELLE STIR!
IF I MAY... WILL YOU BESTOW ME THE HONOR OF A WALTZ?
YOU ARE WELL, ARE YOU NOT?
WELL, YES... I AM DOING QUITE WELL, BUT...


...I MUST DECLINE YOUR OFFER.
WHAT ...?


COME, STIR.
YOU SEE... I AM WAITING FOR A CERTAIN PARTNER...
AND BECAUSE I AM DETERMINED TO DANCE WITH THAT PERSON ALONE...
Well...goodbye.



Jing will return in Volume 6

熊倉裕一 完全監修

who the hell is he !!?

THE KING OF BANDITS CRIME REPORT 2001 EDITION

FIRST VOLUME

On the surface, Jing: King of Bandits appears to be merely an action series about a master thief in a fantasy world. But at second glance, the series is full of hidden puns and inside jokes that occur on many different levels. Here, author Yuichi Kumakura helps us plumb the depths of this deceptively simple series.

characters

It is well-known among King of Bandits fans that the names of almost all characters in the Jing world are taken from the names of alcoholic beverages. Furthermore, all of the towns that Jing and Kir visit carry the names of cocktails--mixtures of said alcohol. In this "crime report," we will explore the origins of these zingy characters and settings. Oh, and while we're on the subject, let's address one of the most common questions asked in fan letters to Yuichi Kumakura: "Do you really drink?" We assure you, Kumakura does not drink nearly as much alcohol as these books would imply--seems he's just not the type.

Jin [Gin=Jing]

Gin is a distilled alcohol made by drenching the contents of the needle juniper in alcohol. Actually, it was originally used in Holland for medical purposes; specifically, as a fever reducer. Today, it is distinguished among the hard liquors by its unique flavor. Jing was originally spelled "Ging," but when the title was incorporated into the logo, it was decided that Japanese people might be confused as to how to pronounce it, since "G" has both a hard and a soft sound in English. Thus, we have the current spelling: "JING."

Ki-Ru [Kir]

Kir is a cocktail made by filling a glass of Créme de Cassis (an alcohol distilled from Cassis, a black berry native to Eurasia) with chilled white wine. It is said the name comes from the then-mayor of Dijon, a city in Burgundy, France. So why was this name chosen for Kir? Can't tell you that, but many believe the name is intricately tied to his mysterious origins.

Ki-Ru Rowaiyaru [Kir Royale]

A specific variation of the above Kir where champagne is added instead of ordinary white wine. In other words, it's a Kir with a high-class connotation. Then again, it seemed like a good idea to add "Royale" (meaning of the king, or of the crown), since it goes with the whole "King" of Bandits theme.

Konyakku [Cognac]

A brandy specifically manufactured in the Cognac region of France. Many believe this particular drink gave rise to the practice of field-dilapidation during religious wars, but looking through the cynical eye of history, one notices that miserable times tend to produce mellow drinks. With that in mind, is Cognac not an appropriate moniker for the mayor of an entire city of ill-intentioned thieves?

Vokka [Vodka]

An alcohol distilled from potatoes, as well as grains such as rye and barley, fermented in malt. It has become an integral part of the culture in cold nations like Russia, and is known for its tendency to produce alcoholics. Speaking of Russia, is it just me or does Vodka, the boss of the first gang of thieves Jing encounters, look like an old man from the northern meridian passage?

Shi-Doru [Cidre]

The name of Cidre, whose heart is the very first treasure captured by Jing, is taken from fruit wine fermented from apple juice. A cheap alcohol that has recently become available in convenience stores, its alcohol content is pretty low. So it is well-suited to such a fragile, crystalline creature.

Roze [Rose]

White and red wines are well-known, but there is another type of wine known as Rosé. Its beautiful pink color makes for an impressive appearance--"Rosé" actually just means rose-colored. The perfect name for a feisty, optimistic policewoman! Her father's name is never mentioned, by the way.

Gurappa [Grappa]

A huge piggy bank full of suspicious gold coins, as it turned out. Grappa's name comes from another type of brandy that is fermented from wine grapes, but is made in Italy. So, naturally, its dignified taste immediately caused the image of a casino boss, wearing steam-armor, to flash before my eyes!

Tomu & Jeri [TOM & JERRY]

Speaking of cartoons, this name also refers to the two main characters of another globally recognized cartoon. But while it does cause two particular animals to come to mind, there is also a drink crowned with this name. It is a mixture of rum, brandy, sugar and egg, and I understand that people often drink it on Christmas Day.

Burū-Hawai [Blue Hawaii]

A shaker-style cocktail using rum as a base and adding orange-flavored liqueur, Blue Curaçao, pineapple juice and lemon juice. This town, as it appears in the series, is a far cry from the image Hawaii usually brings to mind--it was conceived more as a bluish, chilling former resort town.

Morutekaron [Mortecalon]

This is an anagram of the famous Monte Carlo, which is basically a government-run casino. But "Morte" connotes death in French, so it is a very meaningful name when you consider this casino's true colors.

Adonisu [Adonis]

This drink, which takes its name from a pretty-boy loved by Venus in ancient mythology, is a stir-type cocktail (mixed with a bar spoon) using vermouth and orange bitters in dry sherry. That's why it was chosen as this city's name: it symbolizes the parallel of the mythological story with the strange relationship between a nine-tailed fox who possesses a mysterious mind-control technique, and the city's beautifully formed young lord.

Miraberu [Mirabelle]

A type of brandy made from plums. When this character is about to be executed, even as they are about to cut off her head, her braids are reminiscent of an episode that Thomas Moore, author of the 16th-century novel "Utopia," wrote about not cutting his hair before his death sentence.

Van Musu [Vins Mousseux]

This French term is a general reference to sparkling wine, so it is quite suitable as a name for a ruler of a town famous for the cultivation of clockwork grapes. His popular name, of course, is "Masterqear," but that, of course, was just to express his being the most important "qear" controlling a town entirely run by qears.

Eggunoggu [Egg Nogg]

A shake-style cocktail that combines brandy with milk, eggs, sugar and often various other liqueurs. Since it is the name of a group of characters, a cocktail name seemed more appropriate than any single type of drink. I can also say that since it is actually a group of steel roosters, choosing a drink with the word "egg" in it seemed natural.

Sheri [Sherry]

Refers to a type of strongly alcoholic wine made around Jerez, a city in the south of Spain. It is mainly known for its unique taste, which comes from the addition of yeast. Also, this spelling is similar to "Shelley," the name of the author of "Frankenstein." As if any sort of connection could be made between a female fox and the founder of modern-day horror.

Kurokkudairu [Clockdile]

wani = crocodile, and tokei = a juxtaposition of clocks.

Sanguria [Sangria=Sungria]

A popular Spanish wine with the added sweetness of orange and lemon juices. The spelling became "Sunqria" in the series, but it was quite intentional, as the addition of the "Sun" suggests a more fitting destination for Jinq's gang and the porvoras, who set out from Neptune.

Sharutoryu-Zu [Chartreuse]

A liqueur originally distilled from medicinal plants at the Chartreuse Monastery in France. A great amount of this liqueur, said to be an elixir for long life, was made by the monks. Izarra's father, on the other hand, would probably have been dealing in star gems...but the details of his life are unknown.

Izara [Izarra]

Izarra is in the same group of herb-based liqueurs as Chartreuse. No accident--it reflects Chartreuse and Izarra's parent-child relationship. Made in the region of Basque, situated in the Pyrenees mountains between France and Spain where it is said that Hemingway loved to drink. By the way, Izarra means "star" in the Basque language. What a coincidence...

Tanbura [Tumbler]

A tumbler, aside from being Izarra's family name, is a cylindrical cocktail glass. It is used for gin and tonics and the like. Another name for it is a highball glass. It can hold anywhere from 180-300ml of liquid. On (or in? hyuk, hyuk) the other hand...

Goburetto [Goblet]

This is a type of glass with legs that is used for beer and such. It has a capacity of around 300ml. In a nutshell, this episode is pretty much a showdown of the "glasses." Incidentally, the glass Goblet holds during the meal scene is somewhere roughly between a wine glass and a goblet.

Rojo [Rojo]

One of Goblet's twin sons is called Rojo, which means "red" in Spanish (it's pronounced "ro-ho"). So, one would only assume that the other son would be named Blanco ("white")!

Porvo-Ra [Porvora]

Particularly popular, maybe because one or two of them were a struggle even for Jinq, were the Porvoras. However, "Porvora" is one of the few names in the series that are not alcoholic in origin--it actually means "gunpowder" in Spanish!

Ko-Pusu Ribaiba [Corpse Reviver]

Jinq and Kir set off from the town of Corpse and arrive in the town of Reviver...together, these towns make up the cocktail name of Corpse Reviver. This stir-type beverage, touted by some as a hangover cure, is made with vermouth, brandy, and small amounts of liqueurs such as Cointreau, China Lilet, Pernod, etc. in a base of dry gin.

Berumotto [Vermouth]

A type of flavored wine with added spice, fruits, and sugar. France and Italy are its main production centers. When the series came out, its author was reported as saying that Vermouth was designed after Natalie Portman's character in Luc Besson's film, "The Professional." There's definitely similarity in the hair...

Perudo [Pernod]

Pernod was once synonymous with Absente, called the "Devil's alcohol," because of its inclusion of absinthe, a powerful hallucinogen that invades the nervous system. Now that Absente is no longer in production, a new production method has been discovered using medicinal plants. The inspiration for Pernod in this series was apparently Malcolm MacDowell of "Clockwork Orange," directed by Stanley Kubrick (this is especially apparent on page 106 of Volume Three). You see what I mean, right? The unnerving gaze...the makeup around the eyes...

Kinarire [China Lilet]

China Lilet is a flavored wine made from the bark of herbs in the China family. This wine was once used for the medical treatment of malaria. It goes particularly well with Pernod--in fact, the relationship between these two characters seems similar to the dynamic between the two main characters in my personal manga masterpiece! Speaking of which, the makeup on China Lilet's face is kind of familiar...

Koantoro [Cointreau]

An orange, spicy fruit liqueur, produced by the Cointreau company in France. This immortal king may wear a crown, but he is not necessarily at the height of fashion. This manga really does defy traditional fantasy stereotypes, eh?

Vila-Ru [Vilare]

A huge but obedient robot. Its name comes not from alcohol, but the name of a developer of everlasting engines which were carried on the back of the shoulders (history verifies this). It is interesting to note that the passage Vilare reads to the dead Cointreau is the opening paragraph of an actual book. Those readers who are interested may have fun trying to find it.

Senbunsu Hebun [Seventh Heaven]

Seventh Heaven is where the highest-ranking angels reside in Islam. This name, however, refers to a shake-type cocktail that adds Maraschino and grapefruit juice to dry gin. It seems that the historic Castel Sant'Angelo, located in central Rome, became the model for this giant prison. The real castle actually was used as a prison, and also has a story attached to it about a man who somehow broke out of the place! With that man was the 14th-century chaser (or metal engraver) of Firenze, Benvenuto Cellini!! His detailed autobiography was recently assembled, and the first and last volumes are currently being sold by Iwanami Books in Japan. If you read it, I am fairly certain you will discover a surprising parallel with the story behind Seventh Heaven...

Aka Shia [Acacia]

Campari's hometown is named for a cocktail that involves adding Benedictine and Kirschwasser to dry gin and shaking well. Acacia may also sound familiar if one has heard of the "Dalian of Acacia," series, a sequence of novels by Takayuki Kiyooka. It evokes a very nostalgic image for me, so I felt it was a suitable name for the village sleeping within Campari's heart. Also, the clothing of the younger Campari, whom Jing and the gang come across during the dream sequence, makes me think of national clothes during the war in Japan. And the people who send him off are sort of like the people who lamented the young men's departure to the front. The image of a sorrowful people who could not avoid destruction hangs densely in the air...

Benedikutin [Benedictine]

Comparable to the aforementioned Chartreuse, this is another liqueur made in monasteries from medicinal plants. Benedictine's holding a stick and a hula-hoop soon after entering the prison of dreams, along with much of the scenery that follows, was inspired by "Mystery and Melancholy of a Street," the work of an Italian painter, Giorgio de Chirico. The eerie dolls that chase Jing and the gang afterwards, and in fact most of the images of the prison of dreams, were largely inspired by de Chirico's works.

End of King of Bandits Crime Report, First Volume

Continued in Volume 6

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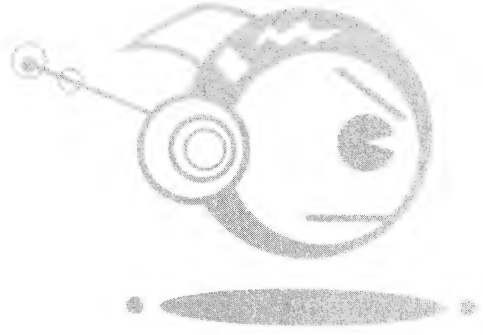

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